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MARIA DE PADILLA

After the painting by Paul Gervais.

WOMAN

In all ages and in all countries

WOMEN OF THE ROMANCE COUNTRIES

by

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Preface

PREFACE

NO one can deny the influence of woman, which has been a potent factor in society, directly or indirectly, ever since the days of Mother Eve. Whether living in Oriental seclusion, or enjoying the freer life of the Western world, she has always played an important part in the onward march of events, and exercised a subtle power in all things, great and small. To appreciate this power properly, and give it a worthy narrative, is ever a difficult and well-nigh impossible task, at least for mortal man. Under the most favorable circumstances, the subject is elusive and difficult of approach, lacking in sequence, and often shrouded in mystery.

What, then, must have been the task of the author of the present volume, in essaying to write of the women of Italy and Spain! In neither of these countries are the people all of the same race, nor do they afford the development of a constant type for observation or study. Italy, with its mediæval chaos, its free cities, and its fast-and-loose allegiance to the temporal power of the Eternal City, has ever been the despair of the orderly historian; and Spain, overrun by Goth, by Roman, and by Moslem host, presents strange contrasts and rare complexities.

Such being the case, this account of the women of the Romance countries does not attempt to trace in detail their gradual evolution, but rather to present, in the proper

setting, the most conspicuous examples of their good or evil influence, their bravery or their cowardice, their loyalty or their infidelity, their learning or their illiteracy, their intelligence or their ignorance, throughout the succeeding years.

Chroniclers and historians, poets and romancers, have all given valuable aid in the undertaking, and to them grateful acknowledgment is hereby made.

JOHN R. EFFINGER.

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Part First

Italian Women

Chapter I

The Age of the Countess Matilda of Tuscany

I

THE AGE OF THE COUNTESS MATILDA OF TUSCANY

THE eleventh century, which culminated in the religious fervor of the First Crusade, must not on that account be considered as an age of unexampled piety and devotion. Good men there were and true, and women of great intellectual and moral force, but it cannot be said that the time was characterized by any deep and sincere religious feeling which showed itself in the general conduct of society. Europe was just emerging from that gloom which had settled down so closely upon the older civilizations after the downfall of the glory that was Rome, and the light of the new day sifted but fitfully through the dark curtains of that restless time. Liberty had not as yet become the shibboleth of the people, superstition was in the very air, the knowledge of the wisest scholars was as naught, compared with what we know to-day; everywhere, might made right.

In a time like this, in spite of the illustrious example of the Countess Matilda, it cannot be supposed that women were in a very exalted position. It is even recorded that in several instances, men, as superior beings, debated as to whether or not women were possessed of souls. While this momentous question was never settled in a conclusive fashion, it may be remarked that in the heat of the discussion there were some who called women angels of light,

while there were others who had no hesitation in declaring that they were devils incarnate, though in neither case were they willing to grant them the same rights and privileges which they themselves possessed. Though many other facts of the same kind might be adduced, the mere existence of such discussion is enough to prove to the most undiscerning that woman's place in society was not clearly recognized, and that there were many difficulties to be overcome before she could consider herself free from her primitive state of bondage.

In the eye of the feudal law, women were not considered as persons of any importance whatever. The rights of husbands were practically absolute, and led to much abuse, as they had a perfectly legal right to punish wives for their misdeeds, to control their conduct in such a way as to interfere with their personal liberty, and in general to treat them as slaves and inferior beings. The whipping-post had not then been invented as a fitting punishment for the wife beater, as it was perfectly understood, according to the feudal practices as collected by Beaumanoir, "that every husband had the right to beat his wife when she was unwilling to obey his commands, or when she cursed him, or when she gave him the lie, providing that it was done moderately, and that death did not ensue." If a wife left a husband who had beaten her, she was compelled by law to return at his first word of regret, or to lose all right to their common possessions, even for purposes of her own support.

The daughters of a feudal household had even fewer rights than the wife. All who are willing to make a candid acknowledgment of the facts must admit that even to-day, a girl-baby is often looked upon with disfavor. This has been true in all times, and there are numerous examples to show that this aversion existed in ancient

India, in Greece and Sparta, and at Rome. The feudal practices of mediæval Europe were certainly based upon it, and the Breton peasant of to-day expresses the same idea somewhat bluntly when he says by way of explanation, after the birth of a daughter: *Ma femme a fait une fausse couche.* Conscious as all must be of this widespread sentiment at the present time, it will not be difficult to imagine what its consequences must have been in so rude a time as the eleventh century, when education could do so little in the way of restraining human passion and prejudice. As the whole feudal system, so far as the succession of power was concerned, was based upon the principle of primogeniture, it was the oldest son who succeeded to all his father's lands and wealth, the daughter or daughters being left under his absolute control. Naturally, such a system worked hardship for the younger brothers, but then as now it was easier for men to find a place for themselves in the world than for women, and the army or the Church rarely failed to furnish some sort of career for all those who were denied the rights and privileges of the firstborn. The lot of the sister, however, was pitiful in the extreme (unless it happened that the older brother was kind and considerate), for if she were in the way she could be bundled off to a cloister, there to spend her days in solitude, or she could be married against her will, being given as the price of some alliance.

The conditions of marriage, however, were somewhat complicated, as it was always necessary to secure the consent of three persons before a girl of the higher class could go to the altar in nuptial array. These three persons were her father or her guardian, her lord and the king. It was Hugo who likened the feudal system to a continually ascending pyramid with the king at the very summit, and that interminable chain of interdependence is well

illustrated in the present case. Suppose the father, brother, or other guardian had decided upon a suitable husband for the daughter of the house, it was necessary that he should first gain the consent of that feudal lord to whom he gave allegiance, and when this had been obtained, the king himself must give his royal sanction to the match. Nor was this all, for a feudal law said that any lord can compel any woman among his dependants to marry a man of his own choosing after she has reached the age of twelve. Furthermore, there was in existence a most cruel, barbarous, and repulsive practice which gave any feudal lord a right to the first enjoyment of the person of the bride of one of his vassals. As Legouvé has so aptly expressed it: *Les jeunes gens payaient de leur corps en allant à la guerre, les jeunes filles en allant à l'autel.*

Divorce was a very simple matter at this time so far as the husband was concerned, for he it was who could repudiate his wife, disown her, and send her from his door for almost any reason, real or false. In earlier times, at the epoch when the liberty of the citizen was the pride of Rome, marriage almost languished there on account of the misuse of divorce, and both men and women were allowed to profit by the laxity of the laws on this subject. Seneca said, in one instance: "That Roman woman counts her years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of her husbands." Juvenal reports a Roman freedman as saying to his wife: "Leave the house at once and forever! You blow your nose too frequently. I desire a wife with a dry nose." When Christianity appeared, then, the marriage tie was held in slight consideration, and it was only after many centuries and by slow degrees that its sanctity was recognized, and its rights respected. While, under the Roman law, both men and women had been able to get a divorce with the same ease, the feudal idea, which gave all

power into the hands of the men, made divorce an easy thing for the men alone, but this was hardly an improvement, as the marriage relation still lacked stability.

It must not be supposed that all the mediæval ideas respecting marriage and divorce and the condition of women in general, which have just been explained, had to do with any except those who belonged in some way to the privileged classes, for such was not the case. At that time, the great mass of the people in Europe—men and women—were ignorant to the last degree, possessing little if any sense of delicacy or refinement, and were utterly uncouth. For the most part, they lived in miserable hovels, were clothed in a most meagre and scanty way, and were little better than those beasts of burden which are compelled to do their master's bidding. Among these people, rights depended quite largely upon physical strength, and women were generally misused. To the lord of the manor it was a matter of little importance whether or not the serfs upon his domain were married in due form or not; marriage as a sacrament had little to do with these hewers of wood and drawers of water, and they were allowed to follow their own impulses quite generally, so far as their relations with each other were concerned. The loose moral practices of the time among the more enlightened could be but a bad example for the benighted people of the soil; consequently, throughout all classes of society there was a degree of corruption and immorality which is hardly conceivable to-day.

So far as education was concerned, there were but a few who could enjoy its blessings, and these were, for the most part, men. Women, in their inferior and unimportant position, rarely desired an education, and more rarely received one. Of course, there were conspicuous exceptions to this rule; here and there, a woman working under

unusually favorable circumstances was really able to become a learned person. Such cases were extremely rare, however, for the true position of woman in society was far from being understood. Schools for women were unknown; indeed, there were few schools of any kind, and it was only in the monasteries that men were supposed to know how to read and write. Even kings and queens were often without these polite accomplishments, and the right of the sword had not yet been questioned. Then, it must be taken into consideration that current ideas regarding education in Italy in this early time were quite different from what they are to-day. As there were no books, book learning was impossible, and the old and yellowed parchments stored away in the libraries of the monasteries were certainly not calculated to arouse much public enthusiasm. Education at this time was merely some sort of preparation for the general duties of life, and the nature of this preparation depended upon a number of circumstances.

To make the broadest and most general classification possible, the women of that time might be divided into ladies of high degree and women of the people. The former were naturally fitted by their training to take their part in the spectacle of feudal life with proper dignity; more than that, they were often skilled in all the arts of the housewife, and many times they showed themselves the careful stewards of their husbands' fortunes. The women of the people, on the other hand, were not shown any special consideration on account of their sex, and were quite generally expected to work in the fields with the men. Their homes were so unworthy of the name that they required little care or thought, and their food was so coarse that little time was given to its preparation. Simple-minded, credulous, superstitious in the extreme,

with absolutely no intellectual uplift of any kind, and nothing but the sordid drudgery of life with which to fill the slow-passing hours, it is no wonder that the great mass of both the men and the women of this time were hopelessly swallowed up in a many-colored sea of ignorance, from which, with the march of the centuries, they have been making slow efforts to rise. So the lady sat in the great hall in the castle, clad in some gorgeous gown of silk which had been brought by the patient caravans, through devious ways, from the far and mysterious East; surrounded by her privileged maidens, she spun demurely and in peace and quiet, while out in the fields the back of the peasant woman was bent in ceaseless toil. Or again, the lady of the manor would ride forth with her lord when he went to the hunt, she upon her white palfrey, and he upon his black charger, and each with hooded falcon on wrist; for the gentle art of falconry was almost as much in vogue among the women as among the men of the time. Often it happened that during the course of the hunt it would be necessary to cross a newly planted field, or one heavy with the ripened grain, and this they did gaily and with never a thought for the hardship that they might cause; and as they swept along, hot after the quarry, the poor, mistreated peasant, whether man or woman, dared utter no word of protest or make moan, nor did he or she dare to look boldly and unabashed upon this hunting scene, but rather from the cover of some protecting thicket. Scenes of this kind will serve to show the great gulf which there was between the great and the lowly; and as there was an almost total lack of any sort of education in the formal sense of the word, it will be readily understood that all that education could mean for anybody was that training which was incident to the daily round of life, whatever it happened to be. So the poor and dependent

learned to fear and sometimes to hate their masters, and the proud and haughty learned to consider themselves as superior and exceptional beings.

With society in such a state as this, the question will naturally arise: What did the Church do under these circumstances to ameliorate the condition of the people and to advance the cause of woman? The only answer to this question is a sorry negative, as it soon becomes apparent, after an investigation of the facts, that in many cases the members of the clergy themselves were largely responsible for the wide prevalence of vice and immorality. It must be remembered that absolution from sin and crime in those days was but a matter of money price and that pardons could be easily bought for any offence, as the venality of the clergy was astounding. The corruption of the time was great, and the priests themselves were steeped in crime and debauchery. In former generations, the Church at Rome had many times issued strict orders against the marriage of the clergy, and, doubtless as one of the consequences of this regulation, it had become the custom for many of the priests to have one or more concubines with whom they, in most cases, lived openly and without shame. The monasteries became, under these conditions, dens of iniquity, and the nunneries were no better. The nunnery of Saint Fara in the eleventh century, according to a contemporary description, was no longer the residence of holy virgins, but a brothel of demoniac females who gave themselves up to all sorts of shameless conduct; and there are many other accounts of the same general tenor. Pope Gregory VII. tried again to do something for the cause of public morality, in 1074, when he issued edicts against both concubinage and simony—or the then prevalent custom of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferment; but the edict was too harsh and unreasonable with regard to the

first, inasmuch as it provided that no priest should marry in the future, and that those who already possessed wives or concubines were to give them up or relinquish their sacred offices. This order caused great consternation, especially in Milan, where the clergy were honestly married, each man to one wife, and it was found impossible to exact implicit obedience to its requirements.

So far as the general influence of women upon the feudal society of Italy in the eleventh century is concerned, it is not discoverable to have been manifest in the ways which were common in other countries. It will be understood, of course, that, in speaking of woman's influence here, reference is made to the women of the upper classes, as those of the peasant class cannot be said to have formed a part of social Europe at this time. It is most common to read in all accounts of this feudal period, which was the beginning of the golden age of the older chivalry, that women exerted a most gentle influence upon the men about them and that the honor and respect in which they were held did much to elevate the general tone of life. In Italy, however, chivalry did not flourish as it did in other countries. Since the time of the great Emperor Charlemagne all Italy had been nominally a part of the imperial domain, but owing to its geographical position, which made it difficult of access and hard to control, this overlordship was not always administered with strictness, and from time to time the larger cities of Italy were granted special rights and privileges. The absence of an administrative capital made impossible any centralization of national life, and it was entirely natural, then, that the various Italian communities should assert their right to some sort of local government and some measure of freedom. This spirit of citizenship in the free towns overcame the spirit of disciplined dependence which was common to

those parts of the empire which were governed according to the usual feudal customs, and, as a result, Italy lacks many of those characteristics which are common to the more integral parts of the vast feudal system.

The most conspicuous offspring of feudalism was chivalry, with its various orders of knighthood; but chivalry and the orders of knighthood gained little foothold in Italy, where the conditions necessary for the growth and development of such a social and military order were far from propitious. Knights, it is true, came and went in Italy, and performed their deeds of valor; fair maidens were rescued, and women and children were given succor; but the knights were foreign knights, and they owed allegiance to a foreign lord. So far, then, Italy was without the institution of chivalry, and, to a great degree, insensible to those high ideals of fealty and honor which were the cardinal virtues of the knightly order. Owing to the absence of these fine qualities of mind and soul, the Italian in war was too often of fierce and relentless temper, showing neither pity nor mercy and having no compassion for a fallen foe. Warriors never admitted prisoners to ransom, and the annals of their contests are destitute of those graceful courtesies which shed such a beautiful lustre over the contests of England and France. Stratagems were as common as open and glorious battle, and private injuries were revenged by assassination and not by the fair and manly *joust à l'outrance*. However, when a man pledged his word for the performance of any act and wished his sincerity to be believed, he always swore by the *parola di cavaliere*, and not by the *parola di cortigiano*, so general was the acknowledgment of the moral superiority of chivalry.

It was in the midst of this age of ignorance that Matilda, the great Countess of Tuscany, by means of her wisdom

and intelligence and her many graces of mind and body, made such a great and lasting reputation for herself that her name has come down in history as the worthy companion of William the Conqueror and the great monk Hildebrand, later Pope Gregory VII., her most distinguished contemporaries. Matilda's father, Boniface, was the richest and most powerful nobleman of his time in all Italy, and as Margrave and Duke of Tuscany, Duke of Lucca, Marquis of Modena, and Count of Reggio, Mantua, and Ferrara, he exerted a very powerful feudal influence. Though at first unfriendly to the interests of the papal party in Italy, he was just about ready to espouse its cause when he fell under the hand of an assassin; and then it was that Matilda, by special dispensation of the emperor, was allowed to inherit directly her father's vast estate, which she shared at first with her brother Frederick and her sister Beatrice. Generally, fiefs reverted to the emperor and remained within his custody for five years—were held in probate, as it were—before the lawful heirs were allowed to enter into possession of their property. Frederick and Beatrice were short-lived, however, and it was not many years before Matilda was left as sole heir to this great domain; she was not entirely alone, as she had the watchful care and guidance of her mother, who assisted her in every emergency.

As the result of this condition of affairs, both mother and daughter were soon sought in marriage by many ardent and ambitious suitors, each presenting his claims for preferment and doing all in his power to bring about an alliance which meant so much for the future. Godfrey of Lorraine, who was not friendly to the party of the Emperor Henry III., while on a raid in Italy, pressed his suit with such insistency that the widowed Beatrice promised to marry him and at the same time gave her consent to a

betrothal between Matilda and Godfrey's hunchback son, who also bore the name of Godfrey. This marriage with an unfriendly prince, after so many years of imperial favor, and this attempt at a consolidation of power for both present and future, so angered Henry that he insisted that Beatrice must have yielded to violence in this disposition of her affairs. Finally, in spite of her repeated denials, she was made a prisoner for her so-called insubordination, while Matilda was compelled to find safety in the great fortress at Canossa. In the meantime, Godfrey had gone back to Lorraine, more powerful than ever, to stir up trouble in the empire.

In this same year, 1054, Henry III. died, and his son, Henry IV., won over by the prayers of Pope Victor II., made peace with Godfrey and restored Beatrice to liberty. They, being more than grateful to Victor for this kindly intervention, invited him to come to their stately palace in Florence and tarry with them for a while. From this time on, in the period when Matilda was growing into womanhood, the real seat of the papal power was not in Rome, but in Florence, and Godfrey's palace became an acknowledged centre of ecclesiastical activity.

Matilda was a girl of a mystic temperament, credulous, it is true, and somewhat superstitious like all the other people of her time, and yet filled with a deep yearning for a greater knowledge of the secrets of the universe. Her ideal of authority was formed by intercourse with the various members of her own circle, who were all devoted heart and soul to the cause of the Holy See, and it was but natural that, when she became old enough to think and act for herself, all her inclinations should lead her to embrace the cause of the pope. While it is beyond the province of the present volume to describe in detail the exact political and religious situation in Italy at this time,

it should be said that the pope was anxious to reassert the temporal power of his office, which had for a long time been subservient to the will of the emperors. He desired the supremacy of the papacy within the Church, and the supremacy of the Church over the state. Early filled with a holy zeal for this cause, Matilda tried to inform herself regarding the real state of affairs, so that she might be able to act intelligently when the time for action came. Through skilful diplomacy, it came to pass that Matilda's uncle—Frederick—became Pope Stephen X.; and then, of course, the house of Lorraine came to look upon the papal interests as its own, and the daughter of the house strengthened the deep attachment for the Church which was to die only when she died. Nor must it be thought that the priestly advisers of the house were blind to the fact that in Matilda they had one who might become a pillar of support for the fortunes of the papacy. The monk Hildebrand, for a long time the power behind the pope until he himself became pope in 1073, was a constant visitor at Matilda's home, and he it was who finally took her education in hand and gave it its fullest development. She had many teachers, of course, and under Hildebrand's guiding genius, the work was not stopped until the young countess could speak French, German, and Latin with the same ease as she did her mother tongue.

Finally, in 1076, when she was thirty years of age, her mother—Beatrice—died, and also her husband, Godfrey le Bossu. The great countess, acting for the first time entirely upon her own responsibility, now began that career of activity and warfare which was unflagging to the end. No other woman of her time had her vast power and wealth, no other woman of her time had her well-stored mind, and no other, whether man or woman, was so well

equipped to become the great protector of the Holy Church at Rome. People were amazed at her ability—they called her God-given and Heaven-sent, and they felt a touch of mystery in this woman's life. Surely she was not as the others of her time, for she could hold her head high in the councils of the most learned, and she the only woman of the number! Nor was she one-sided in her activity and indifferent to all interests save those of the papal party, as her many public benefactions show her to have been a woman filled with that larger zeal for humanity which far transcends the narrow zeal for sect or creed. For, in addition to the many temples, convents, and sepulchres, which she caused to be scattered over the northern part of Italy, she built the beautiful public baths at Casciano, and the great hospital of Altapascio.

Never strong physically, Matilda was possessed of remarkable vitality and an iron will, and she showed great powers of execution and administration, never shirking the gravest responsibilities. A part of her life was spent in the rough camps of her devoted feudal soldiery, and—weak woman though she was—she led them on to battle more than once, when they seemed to need the inspiration of her presence. Women warriors there have been in every day and generation in some part of the world perhaps, but never one like this. Clad in her suit of mail, and urging on her battle horse at the head of her followers, her pale face filled with the light of a holy zeal, it is small wonder that her arms triumphed, and that before her death she came to be acknowledged openly as by far the most important person in all Italy.

It happened at one time that the emperor—Henry IV.—deserted by his friends in Germany, and excommunicated by the pope, found that his only hope for restoration to popular favor lay in a pardon from his enemy and the

lifting of the ban of excommunication. He set out, therefore, alone and without an army, to meet the pope and sue for peace. Gregory, uninformed as to Henry's intended visit (for news did not travel quickly in those early days), was at the time on his way to Germany, where an important diet was to be held, and with him was his faithful ally Matilda. When they learned of the emperor's approach, however, the papal train turned aside to the nearby fortress of Canossa, one of Matilda's possessions, there to await the royal suppliant. In the immense hall of that great castle, all hung with armor, shining shields and breastplates, and all the varied accoutrements of war, the frowning turrets without and the dark corridors within swarming with the pope's defenders, Henry, the great emperor, who had once tried to depose Gregory, was now forced to his greatest earthly humiliation and was compelled to bend the knee and sue for pardon. Matilda it was who sat beside the pope at this most solemn moment, and she alone could share with Gregory the glory of this triumph, for she it was who had supplied the sinews of war and made it possible for the pope to impose his will.

On their return to Rome, to insure a continuance of papal success and give stability to the ecclesiastical organization, she made over by formal donation to the Holy See all her worldly possessions. This was not only an act of great liberality, but it was a very bold assertion of independence, as it was not customary to make disposition of feudal possessions without first gaining the emperor's consent. As it was a foregone conclusion that he would never give his consent to this arrangement, Matilda thought best to dispense with that formality.

Henry's submission was the distinct recognition of papal supremacy for which Matilda had been battling, but Gregory, in his exactions, had overstepped the bounds of

prudent policy, as he had shown himself too arrogant and dictatorial. In consequence, all Lombardy rose against him. Tuscany soon followed suit, and, in 1080, Matilda herseif was forced to take refuge in the mountains of Modena. Henry, who had regained in part his power and his influence at home, descended upon Rome in 1083, and in revenge for his former disgrace, expelled Gregory, who retired to Salerno, where he died soon after. Now comes a period of conflict between popes and anti-popes, Matilda sustaining the regular successors of Gregory, and Henry nominating men of his own choice. The long period of warfare was beginning to weigh heavily upon the land, however, and in a solemn assembly at Carpinetto, the friends and barons of Matilda implored her to cease her struggles, but she refused to listen to their entreaties because a monk of Canossa had promised her the aid of heaven if she should persevere in this holy war. Before long, Lombardy, which had long been restless, revolted against the emperor, and Matilda, by great skill and a display of much tact, was enabled to arrange matters in such a way that she broke Henry's power. This victory made Matilda, to all intents and purposes, the real Queen of Italy, though in title she was but the Countess of Tuscany. Then it was that she confirmed her grant of 1077, giving unconditionally to the pope all her fiefs and holdings. While the validity of this donation was seriously questioned, and while it was claimed that she had really intended to convey her personal property only, so ambiguous was the wording of the document that the pope's claims were in the main allowed, and many of her lands were given over to his temporal sway.

After the death of Henry IV. (1106), she continued to rule without opposition in Italy, though recognizing the suzerainty of his successor, Henry V. In 1110, this emperor

came to visit her at Bibbianello, where he was filled with admiration for her attainments, her great wisdom, and her many virtues. During this visit, Henry treated her with the greatest respect, addressing her as mother; before his departure, he made her regent of Italy. She was then old and feeble, physically, but her mind and will were still vigorous. A few years later, during the Lenten season in 1115, she caught cold while attempting to follow out the exacting requirements of Holy Week, and it soon became apparent that her end was near. Realizing this fact herself, she directed that her serfs should be freed, confirmed her general donation to the pope, made a few small bequests to the neighboring churches, and then died as she had lived, calmly and bravely. Her death occurred at Bendano, and her body was interred at Saint Benoît de Ponderone. Five centuries later, under the pontificate of Urban VIII., it was taken to Rome and buried with great ceremony in the Vatican.

As to Matilda's character, some few historians have cast reflections upon the nature of her relations with Pope Gregory, their stay together at Canossa, at the time of Henry's humiliation, being particularly mentioned as an instance of their too great intimacy. Such aspersions have still to be proved, and there is nothing in all contemporary writings to show that there was anything reprehensible in all the course of this firm friendship. Gregory was twice the age of the great countess, and was more her father than her lover. During her whole lifetime, she had been of a mystic temperament, and it is too much to ask us to believe that her great and holy ardor for the Church was tainted by anything like vice or sensuality. By reason of her great sagacity and worldly wisdom she was the most powerful and most able personage in Italy at the time of her death. If her broad domains could have been kept

together by some able successor, Italian unity might not have been deferred for so many centuries; but there was no one to take up her work and Italy was soon divided again, and this time the real partition was made rather by the growing republics than by the feudal lords.

A consideration of the life of the Countess Matilda points to the fact that there was but this one woman in all Italy at this time who *knew* enough to take advantage of her opportunities and play a great rôle upon the active stage of life. Many years were to pass before it could enter the popular conception that all women were to be given their chance at a fuller life, and even yet in sunny Italy, there is much to do for womankind. Then, as now, the skies were blue, and the sun was bright and warm; then, as now, did the peasants dance and sing all the way from water-ribbed Venice to fair and squalid Naples, but with a difference. Now, there is a measure of freedom to each and all—then, justice was not only blind but went on crutches, and women were made to suffer because they were women and because they could not defend, by force, their own. Still, there is comfort in the fact that from this dead level of mediocrity and impotence, one woman, the great Countess of Tuscany, was able to rise up and show herself possessed of a great heart, a great mind, and a great soul; and in her fullness of achievement, there was rich promise for the future.

Chapter II

The Neapolitan Court in the Time of Queen Joanna

II

THE NEAPOLITAN COURT IN THE TIME OF QUEEN JOANNA

IF you drive along the beautiful shore of the Mergellina to-day, beneath the high promontory of Pausilipo, to the southwest of Naples, you will see there in ruins the tumbling rocks and stones of an unfinished palace, with the blue sea breaking over its foundations; and that is still called the palace of Queen Joanna. In the church of Saint Chiara at Naples, this Queen Joanna was buried, and there her tomb may be seen to-day. Still is she held in memory dear, and still is her name familiar to the lips of the people. On every hand are to be seen the monuments of her munificence, and if you ask a Neapolitan in the street who built this palace or that church, the answer is almost always the same—"Our Queen Joanna."

Who was this well-beloved queen, when did she live, and why is she still held in this affectionate regard by the present residents of sunny Naples? To answer all these questions it will be necessary to go back to a much earlier day in the history of this southern part of the Italian peninsula—a day when Naples was the centre of a royal government of no little importance in the eyes of the mediæval world.

Some three hundred years before Joanna's birth, in the early part of the eleventh century, a band of knightly

pilgrims was on its way to the Holy Land to battle for the Cross. They had ridden through the fair provinces of France, in brave array upon their mighty chargers, all the way from Normandy to Marseilles, and there they had taken ship for the East. The ships were small, the accommodations and supplies were not of the best, and it was not possible to make the journey with any great speed. Stopping, as it happened, for fresh stores in the south of Italy, they were at once invited by the Prince of Salerno to aid him in his fight against the Mohammedans, who were every day encroaching more upon the Greek possessions there. Being men of warlike nature, already somewhat wearied by the sea voyage to which they were not accustomed, and considering this fighting with the Saracens of Italy as a good preparation for later conflicts with the heathens and the infidels who were swarming about the gates of Jerusalem, they were not slow to accept the invitation. While victory perched upon the banners of the Normans, it was evident at once that for the future safety of the country a strong and stable guard would be necessary, and so the Normans were now asked to stay permanently. This the majority did with immense satisfaction, for the soft and gentle climate of the country had filled their souls with a sweet contentment, and the charms and graces of the southern women had more than conquered the proud conquerors. Just as Charles VIII. and his army, some hundreds of years later, were ensnared by the soft glances of soft eyes when they went to Italy to conquer, so the Normans were held in silken chains in this earlier time. But there was this difference—the Normans did not forget their own interests. Willing victims to the wondrous beauty of the belles of Naples, they were strong enough to think of their own position at the same time; and as the French colony

grew to fair size and much importance, they took advantage of certain controversies which arose, and boldly seized Apulia, which they divided among twelve of their counts. This all happened in the year 1042.

It may well be imagined that Naples at this time presented a most picturesque appearance, for there was a Babel of tongues and a mixture of nationalities which was quite unusual. After the native Neapolitans, dark-eyed and swarthy, there were countless Greeks and Saracens of somewhat fairer hue, and over them all were the fierce Normans, strangers from a northern clime, who were lording it in most masterful fashion. The effect of this overlordship, which they held from the pope as their feudal head, was to give to this portion of Italy certain characteristics which are almost entirely lacking in the other parts of Italy. Here there was no free city, here there was no republic, but, instead, a feudal court which followed the best models of the continent and in its time became famed for its brilliancy and elegance. Without dallying by the way to explain when battles were fought and kings were crowned, suffice it to say that, early in the fourteenth century, Robert of Taranto, an Angevine prince, ascended the throne of Naples, and by his wisdom and goodness and by his great interest in art and literature made his capital the centre of a culture and refinement which were rare at that time. This was a day of almost constant warfare, when the din of battle and the clash of armor were silencing the sound of the harp and the music of the poet, but Robert—*Il buon Rè Roberto,* as he was called—loved peace and hated war and ever strove to make his court a place of brightness and joy, wherein the arts and sciences might flourish without let or hindrance.

These centuries of feudal rule had, perhaps, given the people of Naples a somewhat different temper from that

possessed by the people in other parts of Italy. There had been a firm centre of authority, and, in spite of the troubles which had rent the kingdom, the people in the main had been little concerned with them. They had been taught to obey, and generally their rights had been respected. Now, under King Robert, the populace was enjoying one long holiday, the like of which could have been seen in no other part of Italy at that time. The natural languor of the climate and their intuitive appreciation of the lazy man's proverb, *Dolce far niente,* made it easy for them to give themselves up to the pleasures of the moment. All was splendor and feasting at the court, and the castle Nuovo, where the king resided, was ever filled with a goodly company. So the people took life easily; there was much dancing and playing of guitars upon the Mole, by the side of the waters of that glorious bay all shimmering in the moonlight, and the night was filled with music and laughter. The beauty of the women was exceptional, and the blood of the men was hot; passion was ill restrained, and the green-eyed monster of jealousy hovered over all. Quick to love and quick to anger, resentful in the extreme, suspicious and often treacherous, Dan Cupid wrought havoc among them at times most innocently, and many a *colpo di coltello* [dagger thrust] was given under the influence of love's frenzy. But the dance continued, the dresses were still of the gayest colors, the bursts of laughter were unsubdued.

The fair fame of the court of Naples had gone far afield, and not to know of it and of its magnificence, even in those days of difficult communication, was so damaging a confession among gentlefolk, that all were loath to make it. Here, it was known, the arts of peace were encouraged, while war raged on all sides, and here it was that many noble lords and ladies had congregated from all Europe to

form part of that gallant company and shine with its reflected splendor. King Robert likewise held as feudal appanage the fair state of Provence in southern France, rich in brilliant cities and enjoying much prosperity, until the time of the ill-advised Albigensian Crusade, and communication between the two parts of Robert's realm was constant. Naples was the centre, however, and such was the elegance and courtesy of its court that it was famed far and wide as a school of manners; and here it was that pages, both highborn and of low estate, were sent by their patrons that they might perfect themselves in courtly behavior. The open encouragement which was accorded to the few men of letters of the time made Naples a favorite resort for the wandering troubadours, and there they sang, to rapturous applause, their songs of love and chivalry. Here in this corner of Italy, where the dominant influences were those which came from France, and where, in reality, French knights were the lords in control, the order of chivalry existed as in the other parts of Europe, but as it did not exist elsewhere in Italy. Transplanted to this southern soil, however, knighthood failed to develop, to any marked degree, those deeper qualities of loyalty, courtesy, and liberality which shed so much lustre upon its institution elsewhere. Here, unfortunately, mere gallantry seemed its essential attribute, and the gallantry of this period, at its best, would show but little regard for the moral standards of to-day. No one who has read the history of this time can fail to be struck with the fact that on every hand there are references to acts of immorality which seem to pass without censure. As Hallam has said, many of the ladies of this epoch, in their desire for the spiritual treasures of Rome, seem to have been neglectful of another treasure which was in their keeping. Whether the gay gallant was knight or squire, page or courtier, the

feminine heart seems to have been unable to withstand his wiles, and from Boccaccio to Rabelais the deceived and injured husband was ever a butt of ridicule. Of course, there was reason for all this; the ideals of wedded life were much further from realization than they are to-day, and the sanctity of the marriage relation was but at the beginning of its slow evolution, in this part of the Western world.

But within the walls of the huge castle Nuovo, which combined the strength of a fortress with the elegance of a palace, it must not be supposed that there was naught but gross sensuality. Court intrigue and scandal there were in plenty, and there were many fair ladies in the royal household who were somewhat free in the bestowal of their favors, sumptuous banquets were spread, tournaments for trials of knightly skill were held with open lists for all who might appear, but in the centre of it all was the king, pleasure-loving, it is true, but still far more than that. He it was who said: "For me, I swear that letters are dearer to me than my crown; and were I obliged to renounce the one or the other, I should quickly take the diadem from my brow." It was his constant endeavor to show himself a generous and intelligent patron of the arts. The interior of his palace had been decorated by the brush of Giotto, one of the first great painters of Italy, and here in this home of luxury and refinement he had gathered together the largest and most valuable library then existing in Europe.

When Petrarch was at the age of thirty-six he received a letter from the Roman Senate, asking him to come to Rome that they might bestow upon him the poet's crown of laurel. Before presenting himself for this honor, however, to use his own words, he "decided first to visit Naples and that celebrated king and philosopher, Robert, who was not more distinguished as a ruler than as a man

of learning. He was indeed the only monarch of our age who was, at the same time, the friend of learning and of virtue, and I trusted that he might correct such things as he found to criticise in my work." Having learned the reason of the great poet's visit, King Robert fixed a day for the consideration of Petrarch's work; but, after a discussion which lasted from noon until evening, it was found that more time would be necessary on account of the many matters which came up, and so the two following days were passed in the same manner. Then, at last, Petrarch was pronounced worthy of the honor which had been offered him, and there was much feasting at the palace that night, and much song, and much music, and much wine was spilled.

Not the least attentive listener in those three days of discussion and argument was the Princess Joanna, the granddaughter of the king, his ward and future heir. For in the midst of his life of agreeable employment, *Il buon Rè Roberto* had been suddenly called upon to mourn the loss of his only son, Robert, Duke of Calabria, who had been as remarkable for his accomplishments—according to the writers of chronicles—as for his goodness and love of justice. Two daughters survived him, Joanna and Maria, and they were left to the care of the grandfather, who transferred to them all the affection he had felt for the son. In 1331, when Joanna was about four years old, the king declared her the heiress of his crown; and at a solemn feudal gathering in the great audience room of the castle Nuovo, he called upon his nobles and barons to take oaths of allegiance to her as the Duchess of Calabria; and this they did, solemnly and in turn, each bending the knee in token of submission. With the title of Duchess of Calabria, she was to inherit all her father's right to the thrones of Naples and Provence.

As soon as she came under his guardianship, the education of the small Joanna became the constant preoccupation of her kindly grandfather, for he was filled with enthusiasm for the manifold advantages of learning, and spared no pains to surround the little duchess with the best preceptors in art and in literature that Italy afforded. All contemporary writers agree that the young girl gave quick and ready response to these influences, and she soon proved her possession of most unusual talents, combined with a great love for literary study; it is said that, at the age of twelve, she was not only distinguished by her superior endowments, but already surpassed in understanding not only every other child of her own age, but many women of mature years. To these mental accomplishments, we are told that there were added a gentle and engaging temper, a graceful person, a beautiful countenance, and the most captivating manners. And so things went along, and the old king did all in his power to shield her from the corrupting influences which were at work all about her. In that he seems to have been successful, for there is every reason to believe that she grew up to womanhood untainted by her surroundings.

Various forces were at work, however, which were soon to undermine the peace and tranquillity of the gay court, and plunge it into deepest woe. It should be known that by a former division of the possessions of the royal house of Naples, which had been dictated by the whim of a partial father, the elder branch of that house had been allotted the kingdom of Hungary, which had been acquired originally as the dowry of a princess, while to the younger branch of the house Naples and Provence had been given. Such a division of the royal domain had never satisfied those of the elder branch of the family, and for many years the rulers of Hungary had cast longing eyes upon

the fair states to the south. The good King Robert, desiring in his heart to atone for the slight which had been put upon them, decided to marry Joanna to his grand-nephew Andreas, the second son of Carobert, King of Hungary, thus restoring to the elder branch of the family the possession of the throne of Naples without endangering the rights of his granddaughter, and at the same time extinguishing all the feuds and jealousies which had existed for so long a time between the two kingdoms. So the young Hungarian prince was brought to the Neapolitan court at once, and the two children were married. Joanna was but five years old and Andreas but seven when this ill-fated union was celebrated, with all possible splendor and in the midst of great rejoicing. The children were henceforth brought up together with the idea that they were destined for each other, but as the years grew on apace they displayed the most conflicting qualities of mind and soul.

A careful analysis of the court life during these youthful days will reveal the fact that its essential characteristics may be summed up in the three phrases—love of literary study, love of gallantry, and love of intrigue; it so happens that each of these phases is typified by a woman, Joanna representing the first, Maria,—the natural daughter of Robert,—the second, and Philippa the Catanese, the third. Much has been said already of Joanna's love for study and of her unusual attainments, but a word or two more will be necessary to complete the picture. Her wonderful gifts and her evident delight in studious pursuits were no mere show of childish precocity which would disappear with her maturer growth, for they ever remained with her and made her one of the very exceptional women of her day and generation. Imagine her there in the court of her grandfather, where no woman

before her had ever shown the least real and intelligent interest in his intellectual occupations. It was a great thing, of course, for all the ladies of the court to have some famous poet come and tarry with them for a while; but they thought only of a possible *affaire d'amour*, and odes and sonnets descriptive of their charms. There was little appreciative understanding of literature or poetry among them, and they were quite content to sip their pleasures from a cup which was not of the Pierian spring. Joanna, however, seemed to enter earnestly into the literary diversions of the king, and many an hour did they spend together in the great library of the palace, unfolding now one and now another of the many parchment rolls and poring over their contents. Three learned languages there were at this time in this part of the world, the Greek, the Latin, and the Arabic, and the day had just begun to dawn when the common idioms of daily speech were beginning to assert their literary value. So it is but natural to assume that the majority of these manuscripts were in these three languages, and that it required no small amount of learning on Joanna's part to be able to decipher them.

Far different from this little princess was Maria of Sicily, a woman of many charms, but vain and inconstant, and satisfied with the frivolities of life. Indeed, it must be said that it is solely on account of her love for the poet Boccaccio, after her marriage to the Count of Artois, that she is known to-day. Boccaccio had journeyed to the south from Florence, as the fame of King Robert's court had reached him, and he was anxious to bask in its sunlight and splendor, and to bring to some fruition his literary impulses, which were fast welling up within him. And to Naples he came as the spring was retouching the hills with green in 1333, and there he remained until late in the

year 1341, when he was forced to return to his home in the north. His stay in Naples had done much for him, though perhaps less for him personally than for his literary muse, as he plunged headlong into the mad whirlpool of social pleasures and enjoyed to the utmost the life of this gay court, which was enlivened and adorned by the wit of men and the beauty of women. Not until the Easter eve before his departure, however, did he chance to see the lady who was to influence to such a great degree his later career. It was in the church of San Lorenzo that Boccaccio saw Maria of Sicily, and it was a case of love at first sight, the *coup de foudre* that Mlle. de Scudéry has talked about; and if the man's word may be worthy of belief under such circumstances, the lady returned his passion with an equal ardor. It was not until after much delay, however, that she was willing to yield to the amorous demands of the poet, and then she did so in spite of her honor and her duty as the wife of another. But this delay but opened the way for an endless succession of gallant words and acts, wherein the art of coquetry was called upon to play no unimportant part. Between these two people there was no sincere friendship such as existed later between Boccaccio and Joanna, and they were but playing with the dangerous fire of passion, which they ever fanned to a greater heat.

Philippa the Catanese, as she is called in history, stands for the spirit of intrigue in this history; and well she may, as she has a most wonderful and tragic history. The daughter of a humble fisherman of Catania in Sicily, she had been employed by Queen Violante, the first wife of Robert, in the care of her infant son, the Duke of Calabria. Of wonderful intelligence for one in her station, gifted beyond her years, and beautiful and ambitious, she won the favor of the queen to such a degree that she soon

became her chief attendant. Her foster-child, the Duke of Calabria, who tenderly loved her, married her to the seneschal of his palace and appointed her first lady in waiting to his wife; and thus it happened that she was present at the birth of Joanna, and was the first to receive her in her arms. Naturally enough, then, King Robert made her the governess and custodian of the small duchess after her father's death. This appointment of a woman of low origin to so high a position in the court gave offence to many of the highborn ladies there, and none could understand the reason for it all. Many dark rumors were afloat, and, although the matter was discussed in undertones, it was the general opinion that she had been aided by magic or sorcery, and the bolder spirits said that she was in daily communication with the Evil One. However that may be, she was faithful to her trust, and it was only through her too zealous scheming in behalf of her young mistress that she was brought to her tragic end.

As the two children, Andreas and Joanna, grew up to maturity, it became more and more apparent that there was no bond of sympathy between them. Andreas had as his preceptor a monk named Fra Roberto, who was the open enemy of Philippa, and her competitor in power. It was his constant aim to keep Andreas in ignorance and to inspire him with a dislike for the people of Naples, whom he was destined to govern, and to this end he made him retain his Hungarian dress and customs. Petrarch, who made a second visit to Naples as envoy from the pope, has this to say of Fra Roberto: "May Heaven rid the soil of Italy of such a pest! A horrible animal with bald head and bare feet, short in stature, swollen in person, with worn-out rags torn studiously to show his naked skin, who not only despises the supplications of the citizens, but, from the vantage ground of his feigned sanctity, treats

with scorn the embassy of the pope." King Robert saw too late the mistake he had committed, as the sorrow and trouble in store for the young wife were only too apparent. To remedy, so far as was in his power, this unhappy condition of affairs, he called again a meeting of his feudal lords; and this time he had them swear allegiance to Joanna alone in her own right, formally excluding the Hungarians from any share in the sovereign power. While gratifying to the Neapolitans, this act could but excite the enmity of the Hungarian faction under Fra Roberto, and it paved the way for much intrigue and much treachery in the future.

When King Robert died in 1343, Joanna became Queen of Naples and Provence at the age of fifteen; but on account of her youth and inexperience, and because of the machinations of the hateful monk, she was kept in virtual bondage, and the once peaceful court was rent by the bitterest dissensions. Through it all, however, Joanna seems to have shown no special dislike to Andreas, who, indeed, was probably innocent of any participation in the scheming of his followers; Petrarch compares the young queen and her consort to two lambs in the midst of wolves. The time for Joanna's formal coronation was fixed for September 20, 1345, and some weeks before, while the palace was being decorated and prepared for this great event, the young couple had retired to the Celestine monastery at Aversa, some fifteen miles away. Joanna, who was soon to become a mother, was much benefited by this change of scene, and all was peace and happiness about them, with nothing to indicate the awful tragedy which the future held in store. On the night of September 18th, two days before the coronation was to take place, Andreas was called from the queen's apartment by the information that a courier from Naples was waiting to see him upon

urgent business. In the dark corridor without, he was at once seized by some person or persons whose identity has never been made clear, who stopped his mouth with their gloves and then strangled him and suspended his body from a balcony. The cord, however, was not strong enough to stand the strain, and broke, and the body fell into the garden below. There the assassins would have buried it upon the spot, if they had not been put to flight by a servant of the palace, who gave the alarm.

This deed of violence gave rise to much suspicion, and the assertion is often made that Joanna had at least connived at her husband's unhappy end. Indeed, there is a story—which is without foundation, however—to the effect that Andreas found her one day twisting a silken rope with which it was her intention to have him strangled; and when he asked her what she was doing, she replied, with a smile: "Twisting a rope with which to hang you!" But it is difficult to believe the truth of any of these imputations. If she were cruel enough to desire her husband's death, and bold enough to plan for it, she was also intelligent enough to execute her purpose in a manner less foolish and less perilous to herself. Never, up to this time, had she given the slightest indication of such cruelty in her character, and never after that time was the slightest suspicion cast upon her for any other evil act. How, then, could it be possible that Andreas had been murdered by her order? Whatever the cause of this ferocious outbreak, the Hungarian faction, struck with consternation, fled in all directions, not knowing what to expect. The next morning Joanna returned to the castle Nuovo, where she remained until after the birth of her son. During this period of confinement, she wrote a letter to the King of Hungary, her father-in-law, telling him what had taken place. In this epistle she makes use of the expression:

"My good husband, with whom I have ever associated without strife;" and she declares regarding her own sorrow: "I have suffered so much anguish for the death of my beloved husband that, stunned by grief, I had well-nigh died of the same wounds!"

As soon as her strength would permit, Joanna summoned a council of her advisers and signed a commission giving Hugh de Balzo full authority to seek out the murderers and punish them. Suspicion at once fell upon Philippa the Catanese, and upon other members of her family, as her hatred of the Hungarians was well known, and her past reputation for intrigue and mystery only added strength to the accusation. Philippa, who, since the death of King Robert, had been created Countess of Montoni, was now more powerful than ever at the court, and seemed to invite the danger which was hanging over her, in the belief that no harm could touch her head. But her calculations went astray, as Balzo appeared one morning at the palace gate, produced evidence incriminating her and her intimates, and dragged them off to prison, where they were put to death in the most approved Neapolitan fashion—with lingering torments and tortures. From that day the character of the young queen underwent a most decided change. Hitherto she had been gay, frank, and confiding, now she became serious and reserved. She had always been gracious and compassionate, and rather the equal than the queen of those about her,—according to Boccaccio's description,—but treachery had come so near to her, and her trusted Philippa had proved so vile a character, that she never after gave her entire confidence to any person, man or woman.

Some two years after the death of Andreas, for reasons of state, she married her second cousin, Louis of Taranto, a brave and handsome prince of whom she had long been

fond. But she was not to be allowed to enjoy her newly found happiness in peace, as her domains were soon invaded by Louis, the elder brother of Andreas, who had recently ascended his father's throne as King of Hungary, and who now came to avenge his brother's death and seize Naples by way of indemnity. Joanna, deserted by many of her nobles in these dire straits, and not knowing what to do,—as her husband seems to have played no part in this emergency,—decided upon flight as the only means of safety, and, embarking with her entire household in three galleys, she set sail for Provence, where loyal hearts awaited her coming. There she went at once to Avignon, where Pope Clement VI. was holding his court with the utmost splendor; and in the presence of the pope and all the cardinals, she made answer in her own behalf to the charges which had been made against her by the Hungarian king. Her address, which she had previously composed in Latin, has been called the "most powerful specimen of female oratory" ever recorded in history; and the Hungarian ambassadors, who had been sent to plead against her, were so confounded by her eloquence that they attempted no reply to her defence.

In the meantime, Naples, in the hands of the invaders, had been stained with blood, and then ravaged by the great plague of which Boccaccio has given us a picture. Revolting at length under the harsh measures of the Hungarian governor who had been left in charge by Louis, the Neapolitans expelled him and his followers from the city, and sent an urgent invitation to Joanna to return to her former home. Right gladly was the summons answered, and with a goodly retinue of brave knights who had sworn to die in her service she returned to her people, who welcomed her homecoming with unbounded enthusiasm. Now the court resumed its gayety and animation, and again it

became, as in the days of King Robert, a far-famed school of courtesy. Alphonse Daudet gives us a hint of all this in his exquisite short story entitled *La Mule du Pape*, where he tells of the young page Tistet Vedene, *qui descendait le Rhône en chantant sur une galère papale et s'en allait à la cour de Naples avec la troupe de jeunes nobles que la ville envoyait tous les ans près de la reine Jeanne pour s'exercer à la diplomatie et aux belles manières* [who descended the Rhône, singing, upon a papal galley, and went away to the court of Naples with the company of young nobles whom the city (of Avignon) sent every year to Queen Joanna for training in diplomacy and fine manners]. There was further war with the Hungarians, it is true, but peace was established, Sicily was added to Joanna's domain, and there was general tranquillity.

Twice again did Joanna marry, urged to this course by her ministers, but death removed her consort each time, and in the end she was put into captivity by her relative and adopted child, Charles of Durazzo, who had forsaken her to follow the fortunes of the King of Hungary, and who had invaded Naples and put forth a claim to the throne, basing it upon some scheming papal grant which was without legality. Charles had her taken to the castle of Muro, a lonely fortress in the Apennines, some sixty miles from Naples, and there, her spirit of defiance unsubdued, she was murdered by four common soldiers in the latter part of May, 1382, after a reign of thirty-nine years. So came to an end this brilliant queen, the most accomplished woman of her generation, and with her downfall the lamp of learning was dimmed for a time in southern Italy, where the din of arms and the discord of civic strife gave no tranquillity to those who loved the arts of peace.

Chapter III

Women and the Church

III

WOMEN AND THE CHURCH

NEAR the close of the first half of the fourteenth century, after the terrible ravages of the great plague had abated, the people were prostrate with fear and terrorized by the merciless words of the priests, who had not been slow to declare the pestilence as a mark of the wrath of God and who were utilizing the peculiar possibilities of this psychological moment for the advancement of the interests of the Church. In the churches—the wondrous mediæval structures which were newly built at that time—songs of spasmodic grief like the *Stabat Mater,* or of tragic terror such as the *Dies iræ,* were echoing under the high-vaulted arches, and the fear of God was upon the people. In a great movement of this kind it is but to be expected that women played no little part; their more sensitive natures caused them to be more easily affected than were the men by the threats of everlasting torment which were constantly being made by the priests for the benefit of all those who refused to renounce worldly things and come within the priestly fold. There was a most remarkable show of contrition and penitence at this time, and thousands of persons, men and women of all classes, were so deeply moved that they went about in companies, beating themselves and each other for the glory of God, and singing vociferously their melancholy dirges. These were the

Flagellants, and there were crowds of them all over Europe, the number in France alone at this time being estimated at eight hundred thousand. One of the direct results of this state of religious excitement was an increased interest, on the part of women, in religious service, and a renewed desire to devote themselves to a religious life.

The conditions of conjugal life had been such throughout the feudal period that for many years there had been a slowly growing sentiment that marriage was but a manner of self-abandonment to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and many women from time to time were influenced to put away worldly things and seek peace in the protection of some religious order. Tertullian had long before condemned marriage, and Saint Jerome was most bitter against it. The various abuses of the marriage relation were such that those of pure hearts and minds could but pause and ask themselves whether or not this was an ideal arrangement of human life; and, all in all, there was still much to be done by means of educational processes before men and women could lead a life together which might be of mutual advantage to all parties concerned. Still, it must not be supposed that this tendency on the part of women to affiliate themselves with conventual orders was a movement of recent origin.

Since the earliest days of Christianity women had been especially active in the work of the Church, and there were countless martyrs among them even as far back as the time of the Roman persecutions. In the old days of pagan worship they had been allowed their part in religious ceremonies, and with the development of the religious institutions of Christendom this active participation had steadily increased. But, more than this, when it became necessary to withdraw from the corrupt atmosphere of

everyday affairs in order to lead a good life, it came to pass that near the dwellings of the first monks and hermits who had sought the desert and solitude for their lives of meditation were to be found shelters for their wives and sisters and daughters who had followed them to their retreats to share in their holy lives.

Slowly, as in the case of the men, the conventual orders for women were formed in these communities and regulated by such rules as seemed best suited to their needs. At the outset it may be stated that celibacy as a prerequisite to admission to such orders was required of women before it was of men; and so in one way the profession of a nun antedates the corresponding profession of a monk, as the idea of an unmarried life had already made much progress in the Christian Church among women before it came into vogue among the men. It may be that the women of that time were inclined to take literally that chapter in Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians wherein it is said: "There is this difference, also, between a wife and a virgin: the unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit; but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband;" but, however that may be, these orders of unmarried women soon became numerous, and severe were the penalties imposed upon all those who broke the vow of chastity when once it had been made. The consecration of a nun was a most solemn occasion, and the rites had to be administered by a bishop, or by one acting under episcopal authority. The favorite times for the celebration of this ceremony were the great Church festival days in honor of the Apostles, and at Epiphany and Easter. When the nuns were consecrated, a fillet was placed in their hair—a purple ribbon or a slender band of gold—to represent a crown of

victory, and the tresses, which were gathered up and tied together, showed the difference between this bride of Christ and a bride of earth, with her hair falling loose about her shoulders after the Roman fashion. Then over all was placed the long, flowing veil, as a sign that the nun belonged to Christ alone.

The ordinary rules of conduct which were prescribed for the inmates of the nunneries resemble in many ways those which were laid down for the men; and those first followed are ascribed to Scholastica, a sister of the great Saint Benedict, who established the order of Benedictines at Monte Cassino about 529; according to popular tradition, this holy woman was esteemed as the foundress of nunneries in Europe. For the regulation of the women's orders Saint Augustine formulated twenty-four rules, which he prescribed should be read every week, and later Saint Benedict revised them and extended them so that there were finally seventy-two rules in addition to the Ten Commandments. The nuns were to obey their superior implicitly, silence and humility were enjoined upon them, head and eyes were to be kept lowered at all times, the hours for going to bed and for rising were fixed, and there were minute regulations regarding prayers, watches, and devotions. Furthermore, they were rarely allowed to go out of their convents, they were to possess nothing of their own, mirrors were not tolerated, being conducive to personal vanity, and the luxury of a bath was granted only in case of sickness.

As with the ordinary rules of conduct, so the ordinary routine of daily life in a nunnery corresponded to that of a monastery. Hour by hour, there was the same periodical rotation of work and religious service, with short intervals at fixed times for rest or food. The usual occupation in the earliest times had to do with the carding and spinning

of wool, and Saint Jerome, with his characteristic earnestness, advises the nuns to have the wool ever in their hands. Saint Augustine gives us the picture of a party of nuns standing at the door of their convent and handing out the woollen garments which they have made for the old monks who are standing there waiting to receive them, with food to give to the nuns in exchange. The simplicity of this scene recalls the epitaph which is said to have been written in honor of a Roman housewife who lived in the simple days of the Republic: "She stayed at home and spun wool!" Somewhat later the nuns were called upon to furnish the elegantly embroidered altar cloths which were used in the churches, and, still later, in some places girls' schools were established in the convents.

In the eleventh century, the successful struggle which had been made by Gregory VII., with the aid of the Countess Matilda, for the principle of papal supremacy exerted a marked influence upon the religious life of the time and gave an undoubted impetus to the idea of conventual life for women, as during this period many new cloisters were established. It will be readily understood that the deeds of the illustrious Tuscan countess had been held up more than once to the gaze of the people of Italy as worthy of their emulation, and many women were unquestionably induced in this way to give their lives to the Church. In the Cistercian order alone there were more than six thousand cloisters for women by the middle of the twelfth century.

It was during this same eleventh century, when a woman had helped to strengthen the power of the Church, that the influence of the Madonna—of Mary, the mother of Christ—began to make a profound impression upon the form of worship. A multitude of Latin hymns may be found which were written in honor of the Virgin as far

back as the fifth century, and in the mediæval romances of chivalry, which were so often tinged with religious mysticism, she often appears as the Empress and Queen of Heaven. All through the mediæval period, in fact, there was a constant endeavor to prove that the Old Testament contained allusions to Mary, and, with this in view, Albertus Magnus put together a *Marienbibel* in the twelfth century, and Bonaventura edited a *Marienpsalter.* Therein, the gates of Paradise, Noah's ark, Jacob's ladder, the ark of the Covenant, Aaron's rod, Solomon's throne, and many other things, were held up as examples and foreshadowings of the coming of the Blessed Virgin; and in the sermons, commentaries, and homilies of the time the same ideas were continually emphasized. A collection of the Latin appellations which were bestowed upon the Madonna during this time contains the following terms, which reveal the fervor and temper of the age: *Dei genitrix, virgo virginum, mater Christi, mater divinæ gratiæ, mater potens, speculum justitiæ, vas spirituale, rosa mystica, turris davidica, domus aurea, janua cœli, regina peccatorum, regina apostolorum, consolatrix afflictorum,* and *regina sanctorum omnium.*

The Benedictines had consecrated themselves to the service of Mary since the time of the Crusades, and, beginning with the eleventh century, many religious orders and brotherhoods were organized in honor of Mary. The Order of the Knights of the Star was founded in 1022, and the Knights of the Lily were organized in 1048. About the middle of the twelfth century the Order of the Holy Maid of Evora and that of the Knights of Alcantara were established, and others followed. In 1149 Pope Celestine III. chartered the Order of the Holy Virgin, for the service of a hospital in Siena; in 1218, after a revelation from on high, the Order of the Holy Mary of Mercy was founded

by Peter Nolascus—Raymond von Pennaforte—for the express purpose of giving aid and freedom to captives. In 1233 seven noble Florentines founded the Order of the Servants of Mercy, adopting Saint Augustine's rules of conduct, and they dwelt in the convent of the Annunziata, in Florence. In 1285 Philip Benizio founded a similar order for women, and, soon after, the pious Juliana Falconeri instituted for women a second order of the same kind. There was a constant multiplication of these orders vowed to the service of the Madonna as the centuries passed, and the idea of Madonna worship became more firmly fixed.

No account of Madonna worship can be considered complete, however, without some reference to the influence which it exerted upon the art of the time. Madonna pictures first appeared in the East, where the worship of such images had gained a firm foothold as early as the ninth century, but long before that time pictures of the Mother of God were known and many of them had become quite famous. Saint Luke the Evangelist is generally considered as the first of the religious painters, and the Vladimir Church at Moscow is in possession of a Madonna which is supposed to be the work of his hand. The Eastern Church was the first to feel the effect of this outburst of religious art, and it is but natural to find some of its earliest examples in various other Russian cities, such as Kieff, Kazan, and Novgorod. Bronze reliefs of the Virgin were also common, and in many a crude form and fashion this newly aroused sentiment of Christian art sought to find adequate expression. The Western Church soon followed this movement in every detail, and then by slow degrees upon Italian soil began that evolution in artistic conception and artistic technique which was to culminate in the effulgent glory of Raphael's Sistine Madonna. It was the Emperor Justinian's conquest of Italy which "sowed the new art

seed in a fertile field," to use Miss Hurl's expression; but inasmuch as artistic endeavor shows that same lack of originality which was characteristic of all other forms of intellectual activity at this time, the germ took root but slowly, and for a number of centuries servile imitations of the highly decorated and decidedly soulless Byzantine Virgins were very common. One of these paintings may be found in almost every church throughout the length and breadth of Italy; but when you have seen one you have seen them all, for they all have the same expression. The eyes are generally large and ill shaped, the nose is long, the face is wan and meagre, and there is a peevish and almost saturnine expression in the wooden features which shows but slight affection for the Christ-child, and which could have afforded but scant comfort to any who sought to find there a gleam of tender pity. These pictures were generally half-length, against a background of gold leaf, which was at first laid on solidly, but which at a later period was adorned with tiny cherub figures. The folds of the drapery were stiff and heavy, and the whole effect was dull and lifeless. But no matter how inadequate such a picture may seem to us to-day, and no matter how much it seems to lack the depth and sincerity of reality, it possessed for the people of the Middle Ages a mystic charm which had its influence. These pictures were often supposed to have miraculous power, and there are many legends and wonderful tales concerning them.

The first really great master among Italian painters, however, was Giovanni Cimabue, who lived in Florence during the last part of the thirteenth century; he infused into his work a certain vigor and animation which were even more than a portent of the revival which was to come. Other Italian painters there had been before him, it is true, and particularly Guido of Siena and Giunta

of Pisa; but they fail to show in their work that spirit of originality and that breadth of conception which were so characteristic of their successors. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there is an evident effort after an artistic expression of the deeper things of life which shall in some way correspond to the spiritual realities. The yearning human heart which was being solaced by the beautiful story of Christ and the mother Mary, and which was filled with religious enthusiasm at the thought of this Virgin enthroned in the heavens, was growing weary of the set features and stolid look of the Madonna of Byzantine art, and dreaming mystic dreams of the beauty of the Christ mother as she must have been in real life. She became the centre of thought and speculation, prayers and supplications were addressed to her, and more than once did she appear in beatific vision to some illumined worshipper. It was in the midst of this glow of feeling that Cimabue painted his colossal and wondrous *Madonna and Child with the Angels,* the largest altar piece which had been produced up to that time. Cimabue was then living in the Borgo Allegri, one of the suburbs of Florence, and there in his studio this great painting slowly came into existence. As soon as it assumed some definite shape its fame was noised abroad, and many were the curious ones who came to watch the master at his task. The mere fact that this painting was upon a larger scale than any other picture of the kind which had before been attempted in Italy was enough to arrest the attention of the most indifferent; and as the figure warmed into life and the face of the Madonna became as that of a holy woman, human and yet divine in its pity, and with a tender and melancholy expression, the popular acclaim with which the picture was hailed was unprecedented, and Cimabue became at once the acknowledged

master of his time. So great was the joy and appreciation with which this Madonna was received, that a beautiful story is told to the effect that it was only after its completion that the name Allegri [joyous] was given to the locality in which the work was done; but, unfortunately, the facts do not bear out the tale—Baedeker and other eminent authorities to the contrary notwithstanding. Before this picture was taken to the beautiful chapel of the Rucellai in the Chiesa Santa Maria Novella in Florence, where it can be seen to-day, the French nobleman Charles of Anjou went to inspect it, and with him went a stately company of lords and ladies. Later, when it was removed to the church, a solemn religious procession was organized for the occasion. Preceded by trumpeters, under a rain of flowers, and followed by the whole populace, it went from the Borgo Allegri to the church, and there it was installed with proper ceremony.

The list of holy women who, by means of their good lives and their deeds, helped on the cause of the Church during this early time is a long one; in almost every community there was a local saint of great renown and wonderful powers. Ignorance, superstition, and credulity had, perhaps, much to do with the miraculous power which these saints possessed, but there can be no doubt that most, if not all, of the legends which concern them had some good foundation in fact. The holy Rosalia of Palermo is one of the best known of these mediæval saints, and even to-day there is a yearly festival in her honor. For many years she had lived in a grotto near the city; there, by her godly life and many kind deeds, she had inspired the love and reverence of the whole community. When the pest came in 1150—that awful black death which killed the people by hundreds—they turned to her in their

despair and begged her to intercede with them and take away this curse of God, as it was believed to be. Through an entire night, within her grotto, the good Rosalia prayed that the plague might be taken away and the people forgiven, and the story has it that her prayers were answered at once. At her death she was made the patron saint of Palermo, and the lonely grotto became a sacred spot which was carefully preserved, and which may be seen to-day by all who go to visit it on Monte Pellegrino.

In the first part of the thirteenth century two new orders for women grew up in connection with the recently founded orders of the Franciscans and Dominicans; the story of the foundation of the former sisterhood in particular is one of striking interest. This organization originated in 1212 and its members were called Les Clarisses, after Clara, the daughter of Favorino Seisso, a knight of Assisi. Clara, though rich and accustomed to a life of indolence and pleasure, was so moved by the preaching of Saint Francis, that she sent for this holy man and conversed with him at great length upon religious topics. Finally, after a short but natural hesitation, she made up her mind to take the veil and establish an order for women which should embody many of the ideas for which the Franciscan order stood. The Franciscans, in addition to the usual vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, laid special stress upon preaching and ministry to the soul and body. After the conversion was complete, she was taken by Saint Francis and his brother, each one bearing a lighted taper, to the nearest convent, and there, in the dimly lighted chapel, the glittering garments of her high estate were laid upon the altar as she put on the sombre Franciscan garb and cut her beautiful hair.

In the fourteenth century the interest taken by women in the conventual life increased, and one of the most

powerful influences in the religious life of the time was Catherine of Siena, a creature of light in the midst of the dark turmoil and strife which characterize this portion of Italian history. Catherine was the beautiful and high-minded daughter of a rich merchant of Siena, and at a very early age showed a decided inclination for the religious life. At the age of twelve she began to have visions and declared herself the bride of Christ; and through her firmness she overcame the opposition of her parents and the scorn of her friends, and made definite preparations for withdrawal from worldly things. A small cell was arranged for her use in her father's house, and there she would retire for prayer and meditation. At Siena, in 1365, at the age of eighteen, she entered a Dominican sisterhood of the third order, where she vowed to care for the poor, the sick, and for those in prison.

In 1374 she went out in the midst of the plague, not only nursing the sick, but preaching to the crowds in the street, giving them words of cheer and comfort, and to such effect—according to the testimony of a contemporary writer—that thousands were seen clustered about her, intent upon what she was saying. So great had her wisdom become that she was called upon to settle disputes, and invitations came for her to preach in many neighboring cities. Furthermore, on one occasion she was sent on the pope's business to Arezzo and Lucca.

At this time the popes were established in Avignon, in southern France, and thither she went on a visit in 1376. On her departure, the chief magistrate of Florence besought her influence with the pope, who had put him under the ban of the Church. At Avignon she was received with greatest consideration by the College of Cardinals, as well as by the pope, for all had confidence in her good sense and judgment. The story is told, however,

that some of the prelates at the papal court, envious on account of her influence with the pope, and wishing to put her learning to the test, engaged her in a religious discussion, hoping to trip her in some matters of doctrine or Church history. But she reasoned with the best of them so calmly and with such evident knowledge, that they were compelled to acknowledge her great wisdom. In the fall of that same year, as the result of her arguments and representations, Pope Gregory XI. was induced to go back to Rome, the ancient seat of the Church. Catherine left Avignon before the time fixed for the pope's departure; but before returning to Siena, she went to Genoa, where several of her followers were very sick and in need of her care. There in Genoa, Gregory, on his way to Rome, stopped to visit her, being in need of further counsel. Such an act on the part of the pope is ample proof of her unusual ability and her influential position.

The pope once in Rome, she entreated him to bring peace to Italy. At his request, she went to Florence to restore order there. In that city, however, she found a populace hostile to the papal party, and her protests and entreaties were of little avail. Upon one occasion, the crowd demanded her life by fire or sword, and so fierce did their opposition become that even the pope's friends were afraid to give her shelter; it was only through her great calmness and fearlessness that her life was spared. Gregory's death followed soon after, and with his demise Catherine ceased to occupy so conspicuous a place in the public affairs of her time. Gregory's successor, Urban VI., was clever enough to summon Catherine to Rome again, that she might speak in his behalf and overcome the outspoken opposition and hostility of some of the cardinals, who had declared in favor of Clement VII. in his stead, and had even gone so far as to declare him elected. Catherine

was not able to effect a conciliation, however, and here began the papal schism, as the discontented cardinals continued their opposition with renewed vigor and maintained Clement VII. as anti-pope. She was more successful in another affair, as, immediately after her trip to Rome, in 1378 she induced the rebellious Florentines to come to terms of peace with Urban.

The remaining two years of her life were spent in labors for her Dominican order, and she visited several cities in its behalf. At the time of her death, it was commonly reported that her body worked a number of miracles. The authenticity of these supernatural events, however, was ever somewhat in doubt, as the Franciscans always stoutly denied the claims that were made by the Dominicans in regard to this affair. Catherine was canonized in 1461, and April 30th is the special day in each year devoted to her memory. Among the other celebrated nuns and saints of the fourteenth century may be mentioned the Blessed Marina, who founded the cloister of Saint Matthew at Spoleta; the Blessed Cantuccia, a Benedictine abbess; and the Holy Humilitas, abbess of the Order of Vallombrosa at Florence; but none of them compare in pious works or in worldly reputation with the wise and hard-working Catherine of Siena.

In the fifteenth century there was a still further increase of the religious orders for both men and women, which came with the continual extension of the field of religious activity; for the mother Church was no laggard at this time, and never ceased to advance her own interests. In this general period there were three nuns in Italy, each bearing the name of Catherine, who by their saintly lives did much for the uplifting of those about them. The first of this trio was Catherine, daughter of Giovanni Vigeo. Though born in Ferrara, she was always spoken of as

Catherine of Bologna, as it was in the latter city that she spent the greater part of her long and useful life. There she was for many years at the head of a prosperous convent belonging to the nuns of the Order of Clarissa, and there it was that she had her wonderful visions and dreamed the wonderful dreams, which she carefully wrote down with her own hand in the year 1438. For more than threescore years after this period of illumination she continued in her position, where she was ever an example of godliness and piety. Her death came on March 9, 1463; and although her great services to the cause of religion were recognized at this time, and openly commended by the pope, it was not until May 22, 1712, that she was finally canonized by Clement IX.

The second Catherine was Catherine of Pallanza, which is a little town near Novara in Piedmont, some thirty miles west of Milan. During the year of the great pest, her immediate family was completely wiped away, and she was left homeless and with few friends to guide her with words of counsel. Her nearest relatives were in Milan, and to them she went at first, until the first bitterness of her great grief had passed away. Then, acting upon a decision which had long been made, and in spite of the determined opposition of her friends, she took the veil. It was not her intention, however, to enter one of the convents of Milan and live the religious life in close contact with others of the same inclination, for she was a recluse by disposition and desired, for at least a time, to be left alone in her meditations. So she went outside the city walls and established herself there upon a hillside, in a lonely place, sheltered by a rude hut constructed in part by her own hands. Living in this hermit fashion, she was soon an object of comment, and, moved by her obvious goodness, many went to consult her from time to time in

regard to their affairs. She soon developed a gift of divination and prophecy which was remarkable even for that time of easy credulity in such matters, and was soon able to work wonders which, if the traditions be true, were little short of miracles. As an illustration of her wonderful power, it may be stated that it was commonly believed that by means of her prayers children might be born in families where hitherto a marriage had been without fruit. Also, she was able by means of her persuasions to compel thieves to return stolen goods. In spite of the seclusion of her life, the fame of Catherine of Pallanza was soon so great that other women came to live about her; eventually these were banded together in one congregation, governed according to the rules of Saint Augustine. Catherine died in 1478, at the age of forty-one, and somewhat later she was given a place among the saints of the Church, April 6th being the special day devoted to her honor.

There can be little doubt that Saint Catherine of Pallanza, in her comparatively short life, really did more for the cause of true religion than did the pious Saint Catherine of Bologna, who lived almost twice as long within the walls of her quiet and tranquil convent. The one, though a recluse at the beginning of her career, came more into actual contact with people and things than did the smooth-faced, white-handed mother superior in all the course of her calm and unruffled existence. Catherine of Bologna was a model nun, a paragon of humility, devotion, and holiness, but she was something quite apart from the stirring life of the time. Her visions and trances were considered as closer ties between herself and the hosts of heaven, and she was looked upon with awe and wonderment. Catherine of Pallanza, by word and by precept, and by means of the wonderful power which she possessed, exerted a far wider influence for the good of men and women.

Catherine of Genoa, the third of this series, and a member of the old and distinguished Fieschi family, was born in 1447. Notwithstanding her decided wish to enter a convent, and in spite of her repeated protestations, she was compelled to marry, at the age of seventeen, Julio Adorno, a man of tastes uncongenial to her. On account of her slender figure and her delicate health, her parents had felt warranted in their refusal to allow her to become a nun, but the husband of their choice proved a greater trial to her strength and temper than the cloister would have been. After ten years of suffering and brutal neglect, Catherine became the mistress of her own fortunes, for at this time her husband had the good grace to die. With an ample fortune at her command, she was not slow to put it to some public good; and she at once devoted her time and energies to the great hospital at Genoa, which was sadly in need of such aid. In those days before the advent of the trained nurse, the presence of such a woman in such a place was unquestionably a source of great aid and comfort, both directly and indirectly. Nor did she confine her favors to the inmates of this great hospital, for she went about in the poorer quarters of the city, caring for the sick wherever they were to be found. When alone, she was much given to mystic contemplations, which took shape as dialogues between the body and soul and which were later published with a treatise on the *Theology of Love* and a complete life of this noble woman. She died at the age of sixty-three, on September 14, 1510.

The careers of these three women illustrate in a very satisfactory way the various channels through which the religious life of the time found its expression. The life of Catherine of Bologna was practically apart from the real life of her time; Catherine of Pallanza was sought out by people who were in need of her help, and she was able to

give them wise counsel; Catherine of Genoa, representing the more practical side of the Christian spirit, went among the poor, the sick, and the needy, doing good on every hand. Membership in these women's orders was looked upon as a special and sacred office whereby the nun became the mystic bride of the Church, and it was no uncommon thing for the sisters, when racked and tortured by the temptations of the world, to fall into these ecstatic contemplative moods wherein they became possessed with powers beyond those of earth. In that age of quite universal ignorance, it is not to be wondered at that the emotional spirit was too strongly developed in all religious observances, and, as we have seen, it characterized, equally, the convent nun, the priestess of the mountain side, and the sister of mercy. The hysterical element, however, was often too strongly accentuated, and the nuns were often too intent upon their own salvation to give heed to the needs of those about them. But the sum total of their influence was for the best, and the examples of moderation, self-control, and self-sacrifice which they afforded played no little part in softening the crudities of mediæval life and paved the way for that day when religion was to become a rule of action as well as an article of faith.

Chapter IV

The Women of the Midi

IV

THE WOMEN OF THE MIDI

IT must have been part of the plan of the universe that the sunny southern provinces of France should have given to the world a gay, happy, and intellectual society wherein was seen for the first time a concrete beginning in matters of social evolution. There the sky is bright, the heavens are deep, the sun is warm, mountainous hills lend a purple haze to the horizon, and the air is filled with the sweet perfume of thyme and lavender; and there came to its maturity that brilliant life of the Midi which has been so often told in song and story, and which furnished inspiration for that wonderful poetry which has come down to us from the troubadours. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in particular, Provence was filled with rich and populous cities, brilliant feudal courts abounded, and noble lords and ladies not only encouraged song and poetry, but strove to become proficient in the *gay science,* as it was called, for their own diversion.

Under such conditions, it is not surprising to find that women occupy no unimportant place in society and that their influence is far-reaching. Love and its pursuit were the chief concern of the upper classes; and it was but natural, when the intellectual condition of the time and its many limitations are taken into consideration.

What was there to consume the leisure hours in that far-away time? There were no books, there were no newspapers, as there are now, accurate knowledge was impossible in scientific study, there was no theatre or opera—in short, there were none of the things which form the usual means of relaxation and amusement to-day; and so, as a matter of course, yielding to a most human instinct, the tender passion became an all-absorbing topic, and served without exception as the inspiration for poetic endeavor. Love they could know and feel, and of it could they sing with understanding, because they felt it to be real and personal, and subjectively true at least. Of the great external world, however, their knowledge was exceedingly crude; and the facts in nature had become so strangely distorted, through centuries of ignorance and superstition, that the solemnly pronounced verities of the time were but a burlesque upon the truth. Belief in the existence of the antipodes was considered by ecclesiastical authority as a sure proof of heresy, the philosopher's stone had been found, astrology was an infallible science, and the air was filled with demons who were ever waiting for an opportunity to steal away man's immortal soul. Geography did not exist except in fancy; history could be summed up in the three magic words, Troy, Greece, and Rome; and the general notions current regarding the world and its formation were fantastic in the extreme. In the realm of natural history wondrous facts had come to light, and it was averred that a stag lived to an age of nine hundred years; that a dove contemplated herself with her right eye and God with her left; that the cockatrice kills animals by breathing upon them; that a viper fears to gaze upon a naked man; that the nature of the wolf is such that if the man sees him first, the wolf is deprived of force and vigor, but if the wolf first sees the man, his

power of speech will vanish in the twinkling of an eye. Furthermore, there were curious ideas current concerning the mystic power of precious stones, and many were the lapidaries which were written for the edification of the credulous world. The diamond was held in somewhat doubtful esteem, inasmuch as the French word *diamant,* minus its first syllable, signified a "lover"; the beryl, of uncertain hue, made sure the love of man and wife; and Marbodus is authority for the statement that "the emerald is found only in a dry and uninhabitable country, so bitterly cold that nothing can live there but the griffins and the one-eyed arimasps that fight with them."

But the men and women of Provence could not forever stand with mouths agape in eager wonder and expectation; these were tales of interest, no doubt, and their truth was not seriously questioned, but this was not life, and they knew it. There was red blood in their veins, the heart-beat was quick and strong, and love had charmed them all. It must not be supposed, however, that this was a weakly and effeminate age, that all were carpet knights, and that strong and virile men no longer could be found, for such was not the case. All was movement and action, the interests of life were many, and warfare was the masculine vocation, but in the very midst of all this turmoil and confusion there sprang up a courtly ideal of love and a reverence for women which is almost without parallel. The sanctity of the marriage tie had not been respected during the feudal days, the union for life between men and women had, generally, other causes than any mutual love which might exist between the two, and the right of divorce was shamefully misused. While in other parts of Europe women sought relief from this intolerable condition of affairs by giving their love to Christ and by becoming His bride in mystic marriage through the Church,

in bright Provence, aided by the order of chivalry, they were able to do something for the ideals of love in a more definite way and to bring back to earth that all-absorbing passion which women had been bestowing upon the Lord of Heaven. Inasmuch as the real marriage of the time was but a *mariage de convenance,* which gave the wife to the husband without regard for her own inclinations, and without consideration for the finer things of sense and sentiment which should find a perfect harmony in such relationship, it came to be a well-recognized fact that love and marriage were two things quite distinct and different. A wife was expected to show a material fidelity to her lord, keep her honor unstained, and devote herself to his service; and this done, she was allowed to bestow upon a lover her soul and better spirit.

A quaint story with regard to the Chevalier de Bayard, though of somewhat later date, will serve to illustrate this condition of affairs. The brave knight had been brought up during his youth in the palace of the Duke of Savoy, and there, mingling with the other young people of the house, he had seen and soon loved a beautiful young girl who was in the service of the duchess. This love was returned, and they would soon have married in spite of their poverty if a cruel fate had not parted them. Bayard was sent as a page to the court of Charles VIII., and during his absence his ladylove, by the duke's order, was married to the Lord of Fluxas. This Bayard found out to his bitter sorrow when he returned some years later, but the lady, as a virtuous woman, wishing to show him that her honest affection for him was still alive, overwhelmed him with so many courteous acts that more would have been impossible. "Monseigneur de Bayard, my friend," she said, "this is the home of your youth, and it would be but sorry treatment if you should fail to show us here your

knightly skill, reports of which have come from Italy and France." The poor gentleman could but reply: "What is your wish, madame?" Whereat she said: "It seems to me, Monseigneur de Bayard, that you would do well to give a splendid tourney in the city." "Madame," he said, "it shall be done. You are the lady in this world who first conquered my heart to her service, but now I well know that I can naught expect except your kiss of welcome and the touch of your soft hand. Death would I prefer to your dishonor, and that I do not seek; but give me, I pray you, your muff." The next morning heralds proclaimed that the lists would be opened in Carignan, and that the Chevalier de Bayard would joust with all who might appear, the prize to be his lady's muff, from which now hung a precious ruby worth a hundred ducats. The lists were run, and after the last blare of trumpet and clatter of charger's hoof, the two judges, one of them being the Lord of Fluxas, came to Bayard with the prize. He, blushing, refused this great honor, saying he had done nothing worthy of it, but that in all truth it belonged to Madame de Fluxas, who had lent him the muff and who had been his inspiration. The Lord of Fluxas, knowing the chivalry of this great knight, felt no pang of jealousy whatever, and went straightway to his lady, bearing the prize and the courtly words of the champion. Madame de Fluxas, with secret joy but outward calm, replied: "Monseigneur de Bayard has honored me with his fair speech and highbred courtesy, and this muff will I ever keep in honor of him." That night there was feasting and dancing in the halls, next day, departure. The knight went to take leave of his lady, with heavy heart, and many bitter tears they shed. This honest love endured until death parted them, and no year passed that presents were not exchanged between them.

So there was a social life at this time and place which was filled with refinement and courtesy, and it centred about the ladies of the courts. Each troubadour, and many of them were brave knights as well, sought to sing the praises of his lady, devote himself to her service, and do her bidding in all things great and small. There was a proverb in Provence, it is true, which declared that "A man's shadow is worth a hundred women," and another saying, "Water spoils wine, carts spoil roads, and women spoil men"; but, in spite of all this, devotion to women was developed to a most unusual degree, and there was even an attempt made to fix the nature of such soft bondage by rule and regulation. Southern natures were so impetuous that some checks upon the practice of this chivalric love seemed to be imperative, as thinking people felt that love should not go unbridled. Justin H. Smith, who has written so entertainingly of the *Troubadours at Home,* says that it was their expedient to make love a "science and an art. Rules were devised, and passion was to be bound with a rigid etiquette like that of chivalry or social intercourse. It was to be mainly an affair of sentiment and honor, not wholly Platonic to be sure, but thoroughly desensualized. Four stages were marked off in the lover's progress: first, he adored for a season without venturing to confess it; secondly, he adored as a mere suppliant; thirdly, he adored as one who knew that the lady was not indifferent; and finally, he became the accepted lover, that is to say, the chosen servitor and vassal of his lady, her special knight."

To the coarse and somewhat stupid barons of the time infidelity was an act of absolute self-abandonment, and they felt in no way jealous of these fine knights who were more in sympathy with their wives than they could ever hope to be. So the lover became an accepted person who had rights which the wife did not conceal and which the

husband did not deny. The husband literally owned the body of his wife, it is true, but the lover had her soul, for the feudal customs gave to the woman no moral power over her husband, while the code of love, on the other hand, made of woman the guide and associate of man. It was all a play world, of course; the troubadour knight and lover would discuss by means of the *tenso*, which was a dialogue in song, all sorts of questions with his lady, or with another of his kind, while the slow, thick-headed husbands dozed in their chairs, dreaming of sudden alarums and the din of battle. Here, however, was afforded opportunity for a quick display of wit, and here was shown much nimbleness of mind, and, all in all, woman profited by the intercourse and became, as has been said, more than the "link between generations," which was all she had been before. It was in the great hall, about the wide hearth, after the evening meal, that the harp was sounded and the *tenso* was begun which was of such interest to the singer and his fair chatelaine; and among the questions of serious import which they then discussed, the following will serve by way of illustration: "Which is better, to have wisdom, or success with the ladies?" "Which is better, to win a lady by skill or by boldness?" "Which are greater, the joys or the sorrows of love?" "Which brings the greater renown, Yes or No?" "Can true love exist between married persons?" Futile and ridiculous as all this may seem to us to-day, the very fact that women were here put upon the same footing as the men, even upon a superior footing, as great deference was shown them by their knightly lovers, all this was but an indication of the fact that woman's place in society was surely advancing. Thus, outside of marriage and even opposed to it, was realized that which constitutes its true essence, the fusion of soul and mutual improvement; and since that time love

and marriage have more often been found together, and the notion has been growing with the ages that the one is the complement of the other. Marriage, as has been said, was but an imperfect institution at this time, and in many cases it appears that the code of love, as it may be called, was quite superior to the civil code. For example, the feudal law allowed a man to beat his wife moderately, as occasion required, but respect was one of the fundamental laws imposed by the code of love. Again, the civil law said that a woman whose husband had been absent for ten years, and whose whereabouts was unknown, had the right to marry again, but the code of love decreed that the absence of a lover, no matter how prolonged, was not sufficient cause for giving up the attachment. In short, in this world of gallantry the ideals of love were higher than they were in the world of lawful wedlock, and the reason was not far to seek.

It cannot be said, however, that these lofty ideals of Platonic affection which so strongly characterize this brilliant and courtly society were always carried out to the letter, and it must be admitted with regret that there are many cases on record where the restraints and formalities of etiquette were insufficient to check the fateful passion when once its fires were burning. Every forbidden intrigue was fraught with danger; indeed, the injured husband is sometimes alluded to as *Monsieur Danger,* but here, as elsewhere, stolen sweets were sweetest, and the risk was taken. Vengeance, however, followed discovery, and swift was the retribution which overtook the troubadour when guilty of faithless conduct. The tragic story of Guillem de Cabestaing, who came from that district of Roussillon which is said to be famous for its red wine and its black sheep, will serve to show how love could not be bound by laws of honor and how quick punishment came

to pay the score. Guillem, the son of a poor knight, came at the age of twelve to enter the service of my lord Raimon of Roussillon, who was also his father's lord, and there in the castle he began his education. An esquire he became, and he followed his master in peace and in warfare, perfected himself in the gentler arts of song and music, and paid no small attention to his own person, which was fair and comely. On an evil day, however, my lord Raimon transferred young Guillem to the service of his wife, the Lady Margarida, a young and sweet-faced girl who was famed for her beauty, and then began the love between them. Raimon was soon jealous and then suspicious, but false words from false lips allayed suspicion for a time. Then Guillem, in a song composed at his lady's command, revealed the love which united them, though all unconsciously, and then the end was near. One day, Guillem was summoned from the palace into the dark wood by his master, but when Raimon returned Guillem did not come with him; in his stead was a servant, who carried something concealed beneath his cloak. After the dinner, which had been attended with constant jest and laughter, Raimon informed his wife that she had just eaten the heart of the luckless troubadour! Summoning her words with a quick self-control, the Lady Margarida vowed that never after would she taste of meat, whereat Raimon grew red with rage and sought to take her life. But she fled quickly to a high tower and threw herself down to death. That is the tragedy, but this fidelity in death received its reward; for when the king heard the tale, and who did not, as it was soon spread abroad, Raimon was stripped of all his possessions and thrown into a dungeon, while lover and lady were buried together at the church door at Perpignan, and a yearly festival was ordained in their honor.

For many hundreds of years after the decay of all this brilliant life in southern France, the statement was repeated that courts of love had been organized in gay Provence, which were described as assemblies of beautiful women, sitting in judgment on guilty lovers and deciding amorous questions, but the relentless search of the modern scholar has proved beyond a doubt that no such courts ever existed. A certain code of love there was most certainly, of which the troubadours sang, and whose regulations were matters of general conduct as inspired by the spirit of courtesy and gallantry which was current at the time, and very often were questions relating to the tender passion discussed *in extenso* by the fairest ladies of the south, but more than that cannot be said with truth. The fiction is a pretty one, and among those who are said to have presided at these amorous tribunals are Queen Eleanor, the Countess of Narbonne, and the Countess of Champagne, and Richard Cœur de Lion has even been mentioned in this capacity. The courts were held at Pierrefeu, Digne, and Avignon according to tradition, women alone could act as judges, and appeals might be made from one court to another. This tradition but goes to show that after the decay of the Provençal civilization, its various ideas and ideals were drawn up into formal documents, that the spirit of the age might be preserved, and they in turn were taken by following generations in good faith as coexistent with the things which they describe.

It was but natural that in a state of society like the one mentioned, women should long to show themselves possessed of poetic gifts as well as men. It must not be supposed that the wife of a great baron occupied an easy position, however, and had many leisure hours, as her wifely duties took no little time and energy, and it was

her place to hold in check the rude speech and manners of the warlike nobles who thronged the castle halls, as well as to put some limit to the bold words and glances of the troubadours, who were often hard to repress. Her previous education had been bestowed with care, however, the advantages of a formal and punctilious etiquette had been preached more than once, and she was even advised that the enemy of all her friends should find her civil-spoken; so, my lady managed her difficult affairs with tact and skill, and contrived in many cases to acquire such fame for her moderation and her wisdom that many poets sang her praises. It was her pleasure also to harbor these troubadours who sang her praises, and learn from them the secrets of their art; and in this pleasant intercourse it often chanced that she was inspired by the god of song, and vied with them in poesy. The names of eighteen such women have come down to us, and fragments from most of them are extant, though the Countess of Dia seems the most important of them all, as five of her short poems are now known to exist. The Lady Castelloza must be named soon after, for her wit and her accomplishments. She once reminded a thoughtless lover that if he should allow her to pine away and die for love of him, he would be committing a monstrous crime "before God and men." Clara of Anduse must not be forgotten in this list, and she it was who conquered the cold indifference of the brilliant troubadour Uc de Saint-Cyr; still, however numerous her contributions to poetry may have been, but one song remains to us, and that is contained in a manuscript of the fourteenth century. It should be said that the reason for the small amount of poetry which these women have left behind them is easily explained. Talents they may have possessed and poetical ability in abundance, but there was no great incentive to work, inasmuch

as poetry offered them no career such as it opened up to the men. A troubadour sang at the command of his noble patron, but with the women poetry was not an employment, but a necessity for self-expression. It is altogether probable that their efforts were for the most part the result of a sudden inspiration, their mirth or their grief was poured forth, and then they relapsed into silence. Other than in this way the voice of the woman was rarely heard in song, unless she took part in the *tenso,* or song of contention, and then her words were uttered as they came, without premeditation, and were lost as soon as sung.

The city of Toulouse was a centre for much of the literary life of the time, and it was during the reign of Count Raimon VI., who was a poet of no small merit, that the art of the troubadours reached its culmination. For half a generation, it is said, his court was crowded with these poets, and he dwelt with them and they with him in brotherly affection. With the terrible Albigensian Crusade, the voice of the singer was no longer heard in the land, and the poetic fire, which had burned with so fierce a blaze at times, smouldered for long years, until in the beginning of the fourteenth century the flames burst forth anew. At that time a company of poets, and they were of bourgeois origin and not of the nobility, determined to take vigorous measures to restore the art of the troubadour to its former high position, and to this end they founded the Collège du Gay Sçavoir, which was to support and maintain annually in Toulouse a poetic tournament called Les Jeux Floraux, wherein the prizes were to consist of flowers of gold and silver. With the definite establishment of these Floral Games the name of a woman has been intertwined in most curious fashion; and although many facts are recorded of her life and deeds, there are

those who deny that she ever lived. This remarkable woman was called Clémence Isaure, and the story has grown up that some years after the founding of the Jeux Floraux she left a sum of money in trust which was to serve as a permanent endowment for this most illustrious institution of her native city. Then it was that the Collège du Gay Sçavoir became a thing of permanence, and brilliant were the fêtes which were celebrated under its auspices. First, a golden violet was bestowed upon the victor in these poetic contests, and the winner was decreed a Bachelor of Poetry; then, two other flowers were added, the eglantine and the marigold, and he who won two prizes was given the degree of Master; while he who won all three became forthwith a Doctor.

To prove that Clémence Isaure really did exist in Toulouse a tomb was shown which seemed to bear her name; and so strongly rooted is this belief, that her statue is held in reverence, and every year in May, even to this day, when the date for the Jeux Floraux arrives, the first thing on the programme for that solemn occasion is a formal eulogy in honor of this distinguished patroness. More than that, in the garden of the Luxembourg Palace in Paris, in that semicircle of twenty marble statues grouped about the parterre and representing some of the most illustrious women of France, Clémence Isaure has an honored place, and her counterfeit presentment by the sculptor Préault is considered one of the finest of the number.

In support of the claim that such a woman never existed, and in explanation of the tradition itself, the learned ones inform us that with the definite establishment of these Floral Games the good citizens of Toulouse thought it best to follow in the footsteps of their bold and plain-spoken troubadour ancestors in a somewhat timid manner, and the poems which were then written were not addressed

to some fair lady in real life, but to the Holy Virgin, who was frequently addressed as Clemenza [pity], and from this word the story took its rise. After a certain lapse of time, Clemenza, personified so often in their impassioned strains, became a real person to their southern imaginations, and a tomb was conveniently found which seemed to settle the matter without question. It is even asserted that the city of Toulouse is enjoying to-day other bequests which were made to it by Clémence Isaure, and that there is no more reason for doubting her existence than for doubting the existence of any other historical character of long ago. In any event, the Floral Games are still held yearly, the seven poets have become forty in number, and they compose a dignified Academy, which has some ten thousand francs a year to bestow in prizes. And the number of the prizes has been increased, as now five different flowers of gold and five of silver are bestowed each for poetry of a certain kind, and in addition there is a gold jasmine which is awarded to the most excellent prose article, and a silver pink which is a sort of prize at large, and which may be given for a composition of any character.

This belief in the actual existence of Clémence Isaure is still held by many, and, in fact, the legend seems stronger than the facts adduced against it; but whatever the truth may be, the story symbolizes in a most beautiful and fitting way the part which woman has played in this Provençal country in the encouragement given to song and poetry. It was the women who gave the real encouragement to the troubadours and inspired them to their greatest efforts, and it seems but poetic justice, at least, that in Toulouse the only existing institution representative of those old troubadour days should claim a woman as its greatest patron.

Chapter V

Influence of Women in Early Literature

V

INFLUENCE OF WOMEN IN EARLY LITERATURE

"NINE times now since my birth, the heaven of light had turned almost to the same point in its own gyration, when the glorious Lady of my mind—who was called Beatrice by many who knew not what to call her—first appeared before my eyes. She had already been in this life so long, that in its course the starry heaven had moved toward the region of the East one of the twelve parts of a degree; so that at about the beginning of her ninth year she appeared to me, and I near the end of my ninth year saw her. She appeared to me clothed in a most noble color, a modest and becoming crimson, and she was girt and adorned in such wise as befitted her very youthful age. At that instant, I can truly say that the spirit of life, which dwells in the most secret chamber of the heart, began to tremble with such violence that it appeared fearfully in the least pulses, and, trembling, said these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi* [Behold a god stronger than I, who, coming, shall rule over me]. At that instant the spirit of the soul, which dwells in the high chamber to which all the spirits of the senses carry their perceptions, began to marvel greatly, and, speaking especially to the spirit of the sight, said these words: *Apparuit jam beatitudo vestra* [Now has appeared your bliss]. At that instant the natural spirit, which dwells in

that part where our nourishment is supplied, began to weep, and, weeping, said these words: *Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps* [Woe is me, wretched! Because often from this time forth shall I be hindered]."

Nowhere in all literature can be found a clearer statement of the spiritual evolution which was going on in the minds of men with respect to women, at the close of the Middle Ages, than that given in the foregoing passage from Dante's *Vita Nuova*—taken from Professor Norton's finished translation. The spirit of the amatory poetry of the gay troubadours of Provence had found its way into Italy, but it was its more spiritual side which was to make the greater impression upon the national literature at this early stage of its development. The mystic marriage with the Church which had consoled so many women in distress, and which had removed them from the sin and confusion of the hurly-burly world to a life of quiet joy and peace, had slowly been exerting a more general and secular influence which first bore fruit in the notions of Platonic friendship which had been discussed; then came deference and respect and a truer understanding of woman's true position. But something was wanting in this profession of love and respect which came from the singers of Provence; their words were ready and their speech was smooth, but all their knightly grace of manner could not conceal the fact that Venus was their goddess. They were sincere, doubtless, but all that they sang was so lyric, subjective, and personal in its essence that they failed to strike the deepest chords of human feeling or display that high seriousness which is indicative of real dignity of character. Love had been the despot whose slightest caprice was law—in obeying his commands one could do no wrong. Woman became the arbiter of man's destiny in so far as the fervent lover, in his ardor, was glad to do her bidding.

The troubadour Miravel has told us that when a man made a failure of his life, all were prone to say: "It is evident that he did not care for the ladies." There is a worldly tone in this remark which grates upon the ear—it does not ring clear and true, although the Provençal poets had improved the manners of their time and had introduced a highbred courtesy into their dealings with women which was in itself a great step in advance. It is related that when William the Conqueror first saw Emma, his betrothed, he seized her roughly in his arms and threw her to the ground as an indication of affection; but the troubadour was wont to kneel before his lady and pray for grace and power to win her approbation. Yet, under the courtly form of manner and speech, it is too often the sensual conception of womankind which lurks in the background, and there is little evidence to show that there was any general belief in the chastening power of the love of a good woman—a power which might be of positive value in character building.

The spiritual possibilities latent in this higher conception seem, however, to have been grasped by some of the Italian poets of the early Renaissance, and here we find a devotion to women which comes not from the heart alone, but from the soul as well. Dante's "natural spirit" was but the sensual nature, and well might it cry out when the "spirit of life" began to feel the secret commotion of the "spirit of the soul": "Woe is me, wretched! Because often from this time forth shall I be hindered in my work." And so it was. With this first somewhat broad conception of the dignity of womanhood there was a new incentive to manly endeavor; and there came into the world, in the power and might of the great Florentine poet, a majesty of character which fair Provence could never have produced. Immediately before Dante's time we see

glimmerings of this new sentiment in the work of Guido Cavalcanti and of Cino da Pistoja. Cavalcanti, being exiled from Florence, went on a visit to the shrine of Saint James of Compostella; and upon the way, passing through Toulouse, he was captivated by a beautiful Spanish girl, whom he has made celebrated under the name of Mandetta:

> "In un boschetto trovai pastorella,
> Più che la stella bella al mio parere,
> Capegli avea biondetti e ricciutelli."

It is true that in his work Cavalcanti shows many of the stilted mannerisms which were common to the troubadours; but such expressions as "to her, every virtue bows," and "the mind of man cannot soar so high, nor is it sufficiently purified by divine grace to understand and appreciate all her perfections," point the way toward a greater sincerity. His chief work was a long *Canzone sopra l'Amore,* which was so deep and philosophic that seven weighty commentaries in both Latin and Italian have as yet failed to sound all its depths. In the story of the early love of Cino da Pistoja for Ricciarda dei Selvaggi there is a genuine and homely charm which makes us feel that here indeed true love had found a place. Ricciarda—or Selvaggia, as Cino calls her—was the daughter of a noble family of Pistoja, her father having been *gonfaniere* and leader of the Bianchi faction, and it appears that she also was famed for her poetic gifts. For a time she and Cino kept their love a secret from the world, but their poems to each other at this time show it to have been upon a high plane. Finally, the parents of Ricciarda were banished from Pistoja by the Neri, and in their flight they took refuge in a small fortress perched near the summit of the Apennines, where they were joined by Cino, who had determined to share their fortunes. There the spring

turned into summer, and the summer into autumn, and the days sped happily—days which were later called the happiest of the poet's whole life. The two young people roamed the hills together, or took their share in the household duties, and the whole picture seems to breathe forth an air of reality and truth which far removes it from that atmosphere of comic-opera love and passion which seemed to fill the Midi. When the winter came, the hardship of this mountain life commenced; the winds grew too keen, and the young girl soon began to show the effects of the want and misery to which she was exposed. Finally, the end came; and there Cino and the parents, grieving, laid her to her rest, in a sheltered valley. The pathos of this story needs no word of explanation, and Cino's grief is best shown by an act of his later years. Long afterward, when he was loaded with fame and honors, it happened that, being sent upon an embassy, he had occasion to cross the mountains near the spot where Selvaggia had been buried. Sending his suite around by another path, he went alone to her tomb and tarried for a time in prayer and sorrow. Later, in verse, he commemorates this visit, closing with the words:

". . . pur chiamando, Selvaggia!
L'alpe passai, con voce di dolore."

[Then calling aloud in accents of despair, Selvaggia! I passed the mountain tops.] Cino's loved one is distinguished in the history of Italian literature as the *bel numer' una*—"fair number one"—in that list of the famous women of the century where the names of Beatrice and Laura are to be found.

With Dante, the spiritual nature of his love for Beatrice assumed an almost mystical and religious character, betraying the marked influence of mediæval philosophy and

theology; and here it was—for the first time in modern literature—that woman as a symbol of goodness and light found herself raised upon a pedestal and glorified in the eyes of the world. Many a pink and rosy Venus had been evoked before, many a pale-faced nun had received the veneration of the multitude for her saintly life, but here we have neither Venus nor saint; for Beatrice is the type of the good woman in the world, human in her instincts and holy in her acts. The air of mysticism with which Dante has enveloped his love for the daughter of the Portinari family does not in any way detract from our interest in his point of view, for the principal fact for the modern world is that he had such thoughts about women. Legouvé has said that spiritual love was always mingled with a respect for women, and that sensual admiration was rarely without secret scorn and hatred; and it is his further opinion that spiritual love was naturally allied to sentiments of austere patriotism in illustrious men, while those who celebrated the joys of sensual passion were indifferent to the cause of country and sometimes traitor to it. Dante and Petrarch, the two chaste poets, as they are sometimes called, were the most ardent patriots in all Italy. Midst the tortures of the *Inferno* or the joys of the *Paradiso,* the image of the stricken fatherland is ever with Dante, and more than once does he cry out against her cruel oppressors. With Petrarch, as it has well been said, his love for the Latin language was but the form of his love for his people, as in his great hope for the future the glory of the past was to return. Boccaccio was the most illustrious of those in literature who represented the sensual conception of woman; and whatever his literary virtues may have been, no one has ever called attention to his patriotic fervor or to his dignity of character. Laura and Beatrice, though not of royal birth, have been made

immortal by their poet lovers; Boccaccio loved the daughter of a king, but he has described her with such scant respect that what little renown she may have derived from her liaison with him is all to her discredit.

The story of Dante and Beatrice is now an old one, but ever fresh with the rare charm which it possesses even after the lapse of these many years. The *New Life,* Dante's earliest work, which is devoted to a description of his first meeting with Beatrice and his subsequent all-powerful love for her, has been regarded sceptically by some critics, who are inclined to see in it but an allegory, and there are others who go so far as to say that Beatrice never existed. What uncertainty can there be regarding her life, when Cino da Pistoja wrote his most celebrated poem, a *canzone* to Dante, consoling him for her loss? The following stanza from Rossetti's matchless version is proof enough for all who care to read:

"Why now do pangs of torment clutch thy heart,
Which with thy love should make thee overjoyed,
As him whose intellect has passed the skies?
Behold, the spirits of thy life depart
Daily to Heaven with her, they so are buoyed
With thy desire, and Love so bids them rise.
O God! and thou, a man whom God made wise,
To nurse a charge of care, and love the same!
I tell thee, in His name,
From sin of sighing grief to hold thy breath,
Nor let thy heart to death,
Nor harbour death's resemblance in thine eyes.
God hath her with Himself eternally,
Yet she inhabits every hour with thee."

Beatrice certainly lived; and no matter in what veil of mysticism the poet may choose to envelop her in his later writings, and in spite of the imagery of his phrases, even in the *New Life,* she never fails to appear to us as a real woman. We know that Dante first saw her on Mayday,

in the year 1274, when neither had reached the age of ten, and the thrill he felt at this first vision has been described in his own words on the first page of this chapter. From that time forth it seems that, boy as he was, he was continually haunted by this apparition, which had at once assumed such domination over him. Often he went seeking her, and all that he saw of her was so noble and praiseworthy that he is moved to apply to her the words of Homer: "She seems not the daughter of mortal man, but of God." And he further says: "Though her image, which stayed constantly with me, gave assurance to Love to hold lordship over me, yet it was of such noble virtue that it never suffered Love to rule me without the faithful counsel of the reason in those matters in which it was useful to hear such counsel." So began his pure and high ideal of love, which is most remarkable in that it stands in striking contrast, not only to the usual amatory declarations of the time to be found in literature, but also to the very life and temper of the day and generation in which he was so soon to play a conspicuous part. It was a day of almost unbridled passions and lack of self-restraint, and none before had thought to couple reason with the thought of love. For nine years his boyish dreams were filled with this maiden, Beatrice, and not once in all that time did he have word with her. Finally, he says: "On the last of these days, it happened that this most admirable lady appeared before me, clad in shining white, between two ladies older than herself; and as she passed along, she turned her eyes toward that spot where I stood in all timidity, and then, through her great courtesy, which now has its reward in the eternal world, she saluted me with such virtue that I knew all the depth of bliss." But never did Dante come to know her well, though she was ever in his thoughts, and though he must have watched for her presence in the

street. Once she went upon a journey, and he was sore distraught until she came back into his existence; once he was taken to a company of young people, where he was so affected by sudden and unexpected sight of her that he grew pale and trembled, and showed such signs of mortal illness that his friend grew much alarmed and led him quickly away. The cause of his confusion was not apparent to all the company; but the ladies mocked him, to his great dismay, and even Beatrice was tempted to a smile, not understanding all, yet feeling some annoyance that she should be the occasion for such strange demeanor on his part. Later, when her father dies, Dante grieves for her, waits at the corner to pick up fragments of conversation from those who have just come from consoling her, and, in truth, makes such a spectacle of himself, that these ladies passing say: "Why should he feel such grief, when he has not seen her?" He constantly feels the moral force of her influence, and recounts in the following lines—from the Norton translation—her noble influence on others:

". . . for when she goes her way
Love casts a blight upon all caitiff hearts,
So that their every thought doth freeze and perish.
And who can bear to stay on her to look,
Will noble thing become or else will die.
And when one finds that he may worthy be
To look on her, he doth his virtue prove."

Before we are through with Dante's little book, we seem to feel that Beatrice must have lived, that she was flesh and blood as we are, and that she really graced the fair city on the Arno in her time, as the poet would have us believe. She is pictured in company with other ladies, upon the street, in social gatherings at the homes of her friends, in church at her devotions, in tears and laughter, and ever is she pictured with such love and tenderness

that she will remain, as Professor Norton says, "the loveliest and the most womanly woman of the Middle Ages—at once absolutely real and truly ideal."

At her death, Dante is disconsolate for a time, and then devotes himself to study with renewed vigor; and he closes his story of her with the promise that he will write of her what has never yet been written of any woman. This anticipates, perhaps, the *Divine Comedy,* which was yet to be written, wherein Beatrice was his guide through Paradise and where he accords her a place higher than that of the angels. It may mar the somewhat idyllic simplicity of this story to add that Dante was married some years later to Gemma Donati, the daughter of a distinguished Florentine family, but such was the case. Little is known of her, however, as Dante never speaks of her; and while there is no reason to suppose that their union was not a happy one, it is safe to conclude that it gave him no such spiritual uplift as he had felt from his youthful passion.

The extent of Dante's greatness is to be measured not only by his wide learning—for he was the greatest scholar of his time—but also by his noble seriousness, which enabled him to penetrate through that which was light and frivolous to that which was of deep import to humanity. His was not the task of amusing the idle populace with what he wrote—he had a high duty, which was to make men think on the realities of life and of their own shortcomings. People whispered, as he passed along: "See his dark face and melancholy look! Hell has he seen and Purgatory, and Paradise as well! The mysteries of life are his, but he has paid the cost." And many went back to their pleasures, but some were impressed with his expression. Whence came his seriousness, whence came his penetrating glance and sober mien? Why did he move

almost alone in all that heedless throng, intent upon the eternal truth? Because from early youth he had nourished in his heart a pure love which had chastened him and given him an understanding of those deeper things of the spirit, which was denied to most men of his time. Doubtless Dante would have been Dante, with or without the influence of Beatrice, but through her he received that broad humanity which makes him the symbol of the highest thought of his time.

Whatever the story of Petrarch and his Laura may lack in dignity when compared with that of Dante and Beatrice, it certainly does not lack in grace or interest. While Dante early took an interest in the political affairs which distracted Florence, and was of a stern and somewhat forbidding character, mingling study with action, Petrarch, humanist and scholar as he was, represents also the more polite accomplishments of his time, as he was a most polished courtier and somewhat vain of his fair person. Dante's whole exterior was characteristic of his mind. If accounts be true, his eyes were large and black, his nose was aquiline, his complexion dark, and in all his movements he was slow and deliberate. Petrarch, on the contrary, was more quick and animated; he had bright blue eyes, a fair skin, and a merry laugh; and he himself it is who tells us how cautiously he used to turn the corner of a street lest the wind should disarrange the elaborate curls of his beautiful hair. Though record is made of this side of his character, it must not be assumed that his mind was a frivolous one, for he may be considered—as Professor Robinson says—as "the cosmopolitan representative of the first great forward movement" in Western civilization and deserves to rank—as Carducci claims—with Erasmus and Voltaire, each in his time the intellectual leader of Europe.

With regard to Laura, Petrarch has left the following lines, which were inscribed upon the fly-leaf of a favorite copy of Virgil, wherein it was his habit to keep a record of all those things which most concerned him: "Laura, who was so distinguished by her own virtues and so widely celebrated by my poetry, first appeared before my eyes in my early manhood, in the year of our Lord 1327, upon the sixth day of April, at the first hour, in the Church of Santa Clara at Avignon; in the same city, in the same month of April, on the same sixth day, at the same first hour, in the year 1348, that light was taken from our day, while I, by chance, happened to be at Verona, ignorant, alas! of my fate. The sad news came to me at Parma, in a letter from my friend Ludovico, on the morning of the nineteenth of May of the same year. Her chaste and beautiful form was laid in the Church of the Franciscans, the evening of the day she died. I am persuaded that her soul returned, as Seneca says of Scipio Africanus, to the heaven whence it came. I have experienced a certain satisfaction in writing this bitter record of a cruel event, especially in this place, where I may see it often, for so may I be led to reflect that life can afford me no further joys; and the most serious of my temptations being removed, I may be counselled by the frequent perusal of these lines and by the thought of my departing years, that now the time has come to flee from Babylon. This, with God's help, will be easy when I frankly and manfully consider the needless troubles of the past with its empty hopes and unexpected issue."

The Babylon to which Petrarch refers was Avignon, then the home of the popes, which he declares was a place filled with everything fearful that had ever existed or been conceived by a disordered mind—a veritable hell on earth. But here he had stayed this quarter of a century,

a captive to the charms of his fair Laura. According to the generally accepted story, she was of high birth, as her father—Audibert de Noves—was a noble of Avignon, who died in her infancy, leaving her a dowry of one thousand gold crowns, which would amount to almost ten thousand pounds sterling to-day, and which was a splendid marriage portion for that time. In 1325, two years before her meeting with Petrarch, she was married to Hugh de Sade, when she was but eighteen; and while her husband was a man of rank and of an age suited to her own, it does not appear that he was favored in mind or in body, or that there was any special affinity between them. In the marriage contract it was stipulated that her mother and brother were to pay the dower left by the father and also to bestow upon the bride two gowns for state ceremonies, one of them to be green, embroidered with violets, and the other of crimson, with a trimming of feathers. Petrarch frequently alludes to these gowns, and in the portraits of Laura which have been preserved she is attired in either one or the other of them. Her personal beauty has been described in greatest detail by the poet, and it is doubtful if the features of any other woman and her general characteristics of mind and body were ever subjected to such minute analysis as is exemplified in the present instance. Hands and feet, hair, eyes, ears, nose, and throat—all are depicted in most glowing and appreciative fashion; and, from the superlative degree of the adjectives, she must indeed have been fair to look upon and possessed of a great compelling charm. But from her lovely mouth—*la bella bocca angelica,* as he calls it—there never came a weak or yielding word in answer to his passionate entreaties. For this was no mystical love, no such spiritual affection as was felt by Dante, but the love of an active man of the world whose feelings had been deeply troubled.

In spite of his pleadings, she remained unshaken; and although she felt honored by the affection of this man, and was entirely susceptible to the compliment of his poetry, and in spite of the current notions of duty and fidelity, which were far from exacting, she had a better self which triumphed. The profligate Madame du Deffand, who occupies so conspicuous a place in the annals of the French court in the days of its greatest corruption, has little sympathy with a situation of this kind, and is led to exclaim: *Le fade personnage que votre Pétrarque! que sa Laure était sotte et précieuse!* But Petrarch himself thought otherwise, for he has written thereupon: "A woman taught me the duty of a man! To persuade me to keep the path of virtue, her conduct was at once an example and a reproach."

Without following it in all its various incidents, it will suffice to say that this love of Petrarch for Laura, which lasted for so many years, exerted a powerful influence upon the poet and had much to do in shaping the character which was to win for him in later times the praise which Pierre de Nolhac has bestowed upon him in calling him the first modern man. Petrarch considered unworthy, it is true, the poems and sonnets which he consecrated to the charms of Laura, and he even regretted that his fame should rest upon them, when, in his own estimation, his ponderous works in Latin were of much more consequence. But, incidental to his passion for Laura, he was led to discuss within himself the two conceptions of love which were current at that time,—the mediæval and monkish conception, based upon a sensual idea which regarded women as the root of all evil and the source of all sin, and the modern or secular idea, which is spiritual and may become holy. In an imaginary conversation with Saint Augustine which Petrarch wrote to furnish a vehicle for

the discussion of these matters, the poet exclaims that it is the soul—the inborn and celestial goodness—that he loves, and that he owes all to her who has preserved him from sin and urged him on to a full development of his powers. The ultimate result of all this thought and all this reflection upon the nature of the affections developed the humanity of the man, excited broad interests within his breast, gave him a wide sympathy, and entitled him to rank as the first great humanist.

Dante, with his vague and almost mystical adoration of Beatrice, which was at times a passion almost subjective, is still in the shadow of the Middle Ages, their gloom is still upon him, and he can see but dimly into the centuries which are still to come; but his face is glorified by his vision of the spiritual possibilities of good and noble womanhood. Petrarch, in the brief interval which has passed, has come out into the light of a modern world; and there, in the midst of baffled desire, he is brought face to face with the great thought that though love be human it has power divine.

Chapter VI

Women in the Early Renaissance

VI

WOMEN IN THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

ALTHOUGH the fourteenth century in Italy was one of almost continuous warfare between the different contending states of the peninsula, the fact remains that the whole country was enjoying a degree of prosperity which was unprecedented in the history of the Italian people. It was the beginning of the age of the despots, it is true, but in the midst of strife and contention there was at the same time a material progress which did much to enrich the country and enable its inhabitants to elevate their standard of living. The Italian cities were encouraging business transactions on a large scale; Italian merchants were among the most enterprising on the continent, making long trips to foreign countries for the purpose of buying and selling goods; and the Oriental trade, which had been diverted in great measure to Italian channels, was a constant source of profit. That all this could be so in the face of the warlike condition of society is due to the fact that much of the fighting was done by mercenary soldiers, or that the political quarrels of the time, which frequently concerned the fate of cities, too often had their rise in family feuds which, no matter how fiercely they were waged, did not interest the masses. There were always thousands upon thousands of worthy citizens who felt no direct personal interest in the outcome of the fighting, and who pursued the even

tenor of their way without much regard for what was taking place, so far as allowing it to interfere with their daily occupations was concerned.

The general impression of the moral tone of this epoch in society is far from favorable. Divorce had become practically impossible for ordinary individuals; marriage was common enough, but appeared to possess no special sanctity; and as a result there were many illegitimate children, who seem, however, to have been recognized by their fathers and cared for with as great solicitude as were those who were born within the pale of the law. The ideas which were current regarding matters of decency and refinement will be found quite different from those prevalent in our own day. Coarseness in speech and manner was common, no high moral standards were maintained, even by the Church, and diplomacy and calculation took the place of sincerity and conscience. Still, while these may have been the characteristics of a considerable number of the population, the fact must not be forgotten that even in that day of moral laxity there were many good and simple people who lived their homely lives in peace and quiet and contentment, unmoved by the rush of the world. We get a glimpse of what this simple life may have been from a charming little book by Pandolfino called *La Famiglia,* wherein the joys of family life are depicted in a most idyllic manner. The story deals with the beginning of the married life of a young couple; and we are shown how the husband takes the wife to his house after the wedding has been celebrated, displays to her his worldly possessions, and then turns them over to her keeping. After visiting the establishment and giving it a careful inspection, they kneel before the little shrine of the Madonna, which is near at hand, and there they pray devoutly that they may be given grace to profit by all

their blessings, and that they may live long years together in peace and harmony, and the prayer ends with the wish that they may have many male children. The young wife is later advised not to paint her face, and to pay no attention to other men. There is no injunction to secrecy with regard to family affairs of importance, inasmuch as Pandolfino says very frankly that he doubts the ability of a woman to keep a secret, and that, while he is perfectly willing to grant that his wife is loving and discreet, he feels a much greater sense of security when he *knows* she is unable to do him any harm. His quaint phrase is as follows: *Non perchè io non conoscessi la mia amarevole e discreta, ma sempre estimai più securo ch'ella non mi potesse nuocere che ella non volesse.*

The material conditions for happiness—and they are certainly no unimportant factor—were wonderfully advanced, and the common people of Italy at this time were enjoying many comforts of life which were unknown to the higher classes in other countries. The houses were generally large and of stone, supplies were plentiful and cheap, and, all in all, it appears to have been an age of abundance. It was customary for the housewives to lay in a supply of oil and wine for the year; they were most careful in regard to all matters of domestic economy and took a pride in their work. Indeed, Burckhardt has said that from this epoch dates the first conscious attempt to regulate the affairs of a household in a systematic way, and to this end it is interesting to note that bridal outfits were prepared with unusual care, special attention being given to the supply of household linen, which was sometimes elaborate. As a further aid to orderly housekeeping, it was often the custom for the wives to keep a careful account of daily expenditures, which they did with a skill that would doubtless cause the despair of many a modern

housewife who has attempted the same thing. It must not be supposed, however, that the course of this domestic life was without annoyance, as even here at this early day servants were inclined to be exacting and hard to please. At least, that is the inference which may be drawn from a letter by an old notary of Florence, Lapo Mazzei, wherein he takes occasion to say, in inviting a friend to supper, that it will be entirely convenient to have him come, inasmuch as he has taken the precaution, in order not to trouble the house servants, to send to the bakery to be roasted a fat pullet and a loin of mutton!

Some of the customs of this time will seem to us quite primitive. It was an unheard-of thing, for example, to see carriages going about the streets, as they had not yet come into general use, and riding on horseback was the ordinary means of locomotion, even for ladies. Indeed, mention has been found in one of the early historians of an adventure which befell Louisa Strozzi, a daughter of the great Florentine house of Strozzi, as she was returning to her home, from a ball in the early morning hours, *on horseback*. It seems to have been the custom then, as now, to give balls which lasted far into the night, and the growing wealth of the citizens caused an increasing love of display. In some communities laws were enacted in the interests of simplicity, and it was provided that not more than three dishes should be supplied for an ordinary entertainment, while twenty was the largest number which might be served at a wedding feast. With regard to matters of dress, Scipio Ammirato tells us in his sixteenth-century *History of Florence* that in the earliest times the women had the simplest tastes and were "much more soft and delicate than the men," and he adds that "the greatest ornament of the most noble and wealthy woman of Florence was no other than a tight-fitting skirt of bright

scarlet, without other girdle than a belt of antique style, and a mantle lined with black and white." Such simplicity, however, cannot have been long in vogue, for as early as 1323 the chronicler Villani informs us that the city authorities began to enact stringent sumptuary laws which were directed against the women. Three years after this, we learn from the same source that the Duke of Milan had made complaint because the women of Florence had induced his wife to wear, "in front of her face," a most unsightly knot of yellow and white silk, in place of her own curls, a style of headdress already condemned by the city fathers of Florence. After this incident, the historian adds, by way of sententious remark: "Thus did the excessive appetite of the women defeat the reason and sense of the men." These laws of the year 1323 failed to prove effective, and finally, in 1330, more explicit measures were taken to check this growing evil. Villani had now best tell the story in his own words:

"The women of Florence were greatly at fault in the matter of superfluous ornaments, of crowns and wreaths of gold and silver and pearls and of other precious stones, and certain garlands of pearls, and other ornaments for the head, and of great price. Likewise they had dresses cut of several kinds of cloth and silk, with silken puffs of divers kinds, and with fringes of pearls, and little gold and silver buttons, often of four and six rows together. It was also their custom to wear various strings of pearls and of precious stones at the breast, with different designs and letters. Likewise did they give costly entertainments and wedding parties, extravagant and with superfluous and excessive table." In the midst of this deplorable state of affairs, an ordinance was passed forbidding women to wear crowns of any kind, even of painted paper; dresses of more than one piece and dresses with either painted or

embroidered figures were forbidden, though woven figures were permitted. Also, bias patterns and stripes were put under the ban, excepting only those of not more than two colors. It was decided, furthermore, that more than two rings on a finger should not be tolerated. Other cities of Italy, having the same trouble to contend with, sent deputations to Florence asking for a copy of these regulations; this attempt on the part of the cities to control the habits of their citizens in these matters seems to have been quite general.

In matters of education more attention was paid to the boys than to the girls at this time, as the women were generally expected to let the men attend to the chief affairs of life, while they busied themselves with domestic duties. Still, it is on record that in the year 1338 there were from eight to ten thousand boys and girls in school in the city of Florence, learning to read. Among the people of the wealthy class and of the nobility, women were undoubtedly given greater educational advantages in many instances; and then again, in strictly academic circles, the daughters of a professor sometimes distinguished themselves for great learning and scholarship. It was at the University of Bologna in particular that women seem to have been most conspicuous in educational affairs, and here it was that a number of them were actually allowed to wear the robe of a professor and lecture to the students. Among the number famed for their learning may be mentioned Giovanna Bianchetti and Maddalena Buonsignori, who gave instruction in law. The latter was the author of a small Latin treatise of some reputation, entitled *De legibus connubialis,* and the character of this legal work reveals the fact that she must have been much interested in the women of her time, for she has made here in some detail a study of their legal status from certain points of

view. No list of this kind would be complete without mention of Novella d'Andrea, who was perhaps the best known of all these learned women, for to her erudition was added a most marvellous beauty which alone would have been sufficient, perhaps, to hand her name down to posterity. Her father was a professor of canonical law at the University of Bologna, and there it was that she became his assistant, and on several occasions delivered lectures in his stead. At such times it was her custom, if the tradition be true, to speak from behind a high screen, as she had found out from experience that the students were so bewildered by her grace and charm, when she stood openly before them, that they were in no mood for serious study, but gazed at her the while in undisguised admiration.

However pleasurable it may prove to reflect upon this peaceful scene, the fact must not be forgotten that more women were aiding men, directly or indirectly, to break laws than to make them, for many of the most bitter feuds and controversies of the time were waged about a woman. Bianchina, the wife of Vergusio Landi, seduced by the great Galeazzo Visconti, who had been her husband's friend and ally, became the cause of a most ferocious war which was waged between the cities of Milan and Piacenza; Virginia Galucci, abducted by Alberto Carbonesi, brought about a long-standing hostility between these two families and caused much blood to be spilled; many other instances might be cited which would reveal the same state of affairs. A few of the most remarkable of these feuds have been deemed worthy of more extended notice, and the first among the number concerns the quarrel between the Buondelmonti and the Amedei, in Florence, in the thirteenth century. Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti, a young nobleman from the upper Val d'Arno and a member of the Guelph

party, was to marry a daughter of the house of Amedei, staunch Ghibelline supporters, and the wedding day was fast approaching; one day the young Guelph was met upon the street by a lady of the Donati family, also a Guelph, who reproached him for his intended union with one of the hated party, and urged him to marry her own daughter, Ciulla, who was far more desirable. The sight of the fair Donati was too much for the quick passions of Buondelmonte; he fell in love with her at once, and straightway repudiated his former plan of marriage. It may well be imagined that the Amedei were enraged at this; the powerful Uberti and all the other Ghibelline families in Florence, about twenty-four in all, joined with them, and they swore to kill the fickle young lover on sight. On Easter morning, they lay in wait for the handsome but heedless young Buondelmonte at the north end of the Ponte Vecchio; and when he appeared, boldly riding without an escort, all clothed in white and upon a milk-white steed, they fell upon him and struck him to the ground, and left him dying there, his Easter tunic dripping with his blood. Their savage yell of triumph over this assassination was not the end, but the beginning, for forty-two Guelph families immediately took up the quarrel and swore to avenge the death of their comrade, and for more than thirty years the strife continued.

The story of Imelda de' Lambertazzi is even more tragic in its results, as here the woman has to suffer as well as the man, and in its general outlines this incident recalls many of the features of *Romeo and Juliet,* though there is no evidence that Shakespeare used it in any way, but rather confined his attention to the traditional story of the lovers of Verona. The Lambertazzi were a noble family of Bologna, and the daughter of the house had long been wooed most ardently by Bonifacio de' Geremei, whose

family was in deadly feud with her own. Yielding finally to his entreaties, she allowed him to come to see her in her own apartments; but there they were surprised by her two brothers, who considered his presence as an affront offered not only to their sister, but to their house. Imelda barely had time to escape before the two men rushed upon Bonifacio, who was powerless to defend himself. With poisoned daggers, whose secret had been learned from the Saracens by the Crusaders, he was speedily stabbed to the heart, and then dragged into a dark corner beneath a winding staircase. After seeing her brothers leave the palace, Imelda returned to discover her lover's fate, while they rushed off to raise a hue and cry and plan for further deeds of violence. Imelda found the room where she had left the struggling men empty, but, following the drops of blood upon the floor, she soon came to the lifeless body hidden away. Drawing it out to the light, she found that it was still warm, and, knowing the secret of her brothers' weapons, she resolved upon a desperate remedy, and endeavored to suck the poison from the wounds. The result of this most heroic attempt was fearful: the poison was communicated to her own veins, and she was soon stretched lifeless beside the luckless lover. There they were found by anxious servants, who, knowing of the quarrel, had not dared to stir about at first. Hallam says, after his account of this event: "So cruel an outrage wrought the Geremei to madness; they formed alliances with some of the neighboring republics; the Lambertazzi took the same measures; and after a fight in the streets of Bologna of forty days' duration, the latter were driven out of the city, with all the Ghibellines, their political associates. Twelve thousand citizens were condemned to banishment, their houses razed, and their estates confiscated."

Another story of bloody violence centres in the territory from Padova and Treviso, on the one hand, to Vicenza and Verona, on the other; and while the incidents took place in mediæval times, dating from the latter part of the twelfth century, the consequences were so widespread and so lasting that they were by no means dead in the days of the early Renaissance. Tisolino di Camposampiero, a nobleman of Padova, confided to his friend Ezzelino, the feudal lord of Onar and Romano, that it was his intention to marry his son to the rich heiress of Abano, Cecilia Ricco by name. Ezzelino received this confidence, and promised to keep the secret; but no sooner had he parted from the Padovan nobleman than he made plans of his own, and succeeded in marrying his own son to the desirable heiress before Tisolino could interpose. What more was needed to start a feud of the first magnitude? Tisolino's disappointed son, whose heart was now filled with vengeance rather than with unrequited love, abducted his former fiancée by means of a clever ruse, and carried her off to his father's stronghold. The next day she was sent back, dishonored, to her husband, who refused to receive her under these circumstances; but at the same time he felt no compunctions about retaining her extensive dowry, which comprised many strong castles and other feudal holdings. Then the long struggle began which was to take many lives and last for many years. Succeeding generations inherited the hatred as one of their most cherished possessions, and it was almost a century before the quarrel spent itself.

One of the most beautiful and pathetic stories of this whole period, however, is the one which concerns the fate of Madonna Francesca, daughter of Guido the Elder, Lord of Ravenna and of Cervia. For many years, according to Boccaccio's account, Guido had waged a grievous war

with the Lord Malatesta of Rimini, and finally, when peace was brought about between them through the mediation of friends, it was thought advisable to cement the friendship with as close a tie as possible. To that end, Guido agreed to give his fair young daughter, Francesca, in marriage to Gianciotto, Malatesta's son, without a thought to her own desires in the matter. When the plan was noised abroad, certain friends of Guido, knowing Gianciotto to be lame and rather rough in his manners, and considering it very doubtful whether Francesca would consent to marry him when once she had seen him, came to the father and urged him to act with discretion, so that no scandal might arise over the matter. It happened that there was a younger son of the house of Malatesta, Paolo by name, who was young and handsome and possessed of most courtly and winning manners, and it was advised that he be sent to marry Francesca by proxy in his brother's stead, and that she should be kept in ignorance regarding the real state of affairs until it was too late to withdraw her word. So Paolo came to Ravenna with a brilliant train of gentlemen to celebrate the wedding festivities; and as he crossed the courtyard of the palace on the morning of his arrival, a maid who knew him pointed him out to Francesca through the open window, saying: "That is he who is to be your husband." This Francesca believed, as she had no reason to think otherwise, so skilfully was the marriage ceremony arranged, and it was not until her arrival at Rimini that she knew her fate. For there, on the morning following her coming, as she saw Gianciotto rise from her side, when she had thought him to be Paolo, the sad truth burst upon her. What excuses Paolo could give for this strange deception we are not told, but the fact remains that Francesca still loved him, and looked with scorn upon his misshapen brother. From that time the dangerous moment

slowly approached. Living together in the same palace, it was but natural that Paolo and Francesca should be much in each other's society; while Gianciotto, unloved and unlovely, busied himself with his own affairs, which sometimes took him to other cities, as he was a man of ambition and essayed by political manœuvres to advance his own interests. It happened once that in returning from one of these journeys he saw Paolo enter Francesca's room, and then for the first time he became jealous. Hitherto he had known of their affection for each other, but it had never dawned upon him that his own brother could thus betray his trust, while under his roof and receiving his protection. Now he rushed up the broad stairway and made straight for Francesca's door, anxious to know the worst. The door was found locked before him, and his hurried knocks brought sudden terror to the lovers within. There was an open window, however, through which Paolo counted upon disappearing, and so he bade the lady make haste to open to her lord, that he might not be curious. As Francesca opened the door, Paolo found to his dismay that the edge of his cloak had caught upon a nail; so that when Gianciotto, red with anger, burst into the room, the fatal secret was disclosed. Grasping his dagger, without a moment's hesitation, he stepped quickly to the window and would have slain his brother with a single mighty blow, but Francesca, throwing herself before him, sheathed the dagger in her heart and fell dead at his feet. Gianciotto, still burning for revenge, and unmoved by his first bloody deed, again struck at Paolo, and this time he slew him. Then, following the words of the old story, "leaving them both dead, he hastily went his way and betook him to his wonted affairs; and the next morning the two lovers, with many tears, were buried together in one grave."

There is a terrible pathos about this story which has made it live during all these years. Through every line of it runs a commentary upon the barbarous customs of the time, which made such a situation possible, and its climax was so inevitable and so necessary, according to all the laws of nature, that we of a later day are inclined to shed a sympathetic tear and heave a sigh of regret.

Dante has placed the two lovers in his *Inferno* for their sin, but in the fifth canto, where he first sees them, he is moved to such pity for their unhappy lot that he exclaims:

". . . Francesca, i tuoi martiri
A lagrimar mi fanno tristo e pio!"

[Thine agonies, Francesca, sad and compassionate to weeping make me!] And before she finished telling her tragic story, he swooned away as if he had been dying, "and fell, even as a dead body falls."

In a more recent time this story has been told by Silvio Pellico, who wrote a tragedy on the subject, and by Leigh Hunt in a poem. In England, Boker wrote a successful tragedy upon it many years ago, and more recently Stephen Phillips, in his *Paolo and Francesca,* has produced a dramatic poem of rare merit. Most recently of all, Gabriele d'Annunzio, the well-known Italian poet and novelist, has made this story the subject of a powerful drama, which was interpreted in a most wonderful way by the great Italian actress, Eleonora Duse. To show that others than poets have been inspired by Francesca's unhappy history, it may be of interest to record the fact that noted pictures illustrating the story have been painted by many of the greatest artists.

To return to that early period in Italian history, so filled with strife and discord, it should be said that in spite of this constant warfare, the richer princes, especially in the north of Italy, lived in a most sumptuous manner, and

prepared the way, to a certain degree, for the splendor of Lorenzo the Magnificent, which was to appear in the century following. The women in these regal courts were clothed in the most extravagant fashion, and the precious stuffs and precious stones of all the known world were laid at their feet by their admirers. Among these affluent noblemen of the fourteenth century, Galeazzo Visconti was generally considered the handsomest man of his age. Symonds tells us that he was tall and graceful, with golden hair which he wore in long plaits, or tied up in a net, or else loose and crowned with flowers. By nature he was fond of display, liked to make a great show of his wealth, and spent much money in public entertainments and feasts and in the construction of beautiful palaces and churches. His wealth was so great and his reputation had gone so far abroad that he was able to do what other rich Italian noblemen accomplished in a somewhat later time—arrange royal marriages for some of his children. His daughter Violante was wedded with great ceremony to the Duke of Clarence, son of Edward III. of England, who is said to have received with her as a dowry the sum of two hundred thousand golden florins, and at the same time five cities on the Piedmont frontier. London was a muddy, unpaved city at this time, primitive in the extreme; the houses were still covered with thatched roofs, beds were still made upon bundles of straw cast upon the floors, and wine was so scarce that it was generally sold for medicinal purposes. It has been pointed out that it must have been a strange experience for this English nobleman to leave all that and come to a country of warmth and sunshine, where the houses were large and comfortable and made of marble, where the streets were dry and paved, where wine was as plenty as water, and where ease and luxury were seen on every hand.

This royal marriage was celebrated at Pavia, where Galeazzo held his court, and the historian Giovio has given some curious and interesting details regarding it. He says that on the completion of the ceremony Galeazzo gave rich gifts to more than two hundred Englishmen, and it was generally considered that he had shown himself more generous than the greatest kings. At the wedding feast, Gian Galeazzo, the bride's brother,—who was afterward married to Isabella, the daughter of King John of France,—at the head of a band of noble youths, brought wonderful new gifts to the table with the arrival of each new course upon the bill of fare. "At one time it was sixty most beautiful horses, adorned with gold and silver trappings; at another, silver plate, hawks, hounds, fine cuirasses, suits of armor of wrought steel, helmets decorated with crests, tunics adorned with pearls, belts, precious jewels set in gold, and great quantities of cloth of gold and crimson stuff for the making of garments. Such was the profusion at this banquet that the remnants taken from the table were more than enough to supply ten thousand men." Not every heiress in Italy could have gloried in such a wedding feast as the one given in honor of Violante Visconti, but the wealth of these petty rulers was something almost incredible, and the general prosperity of the common people passes belief. As has always been the case under such circumstances, increasing wealth has brought about increased expenditure, principally in matters of dress, and the women in particular seem to have made the most of this opportunity. Vanity and frivolity multiplied on every hand as a natural consequence; the Church was growing daily less able to cope with the moral degeneracy of the time on account of its own immoral condition; thus, the foundations were being laid for those centuries of corruption and national weakness which were soon to follow.

Chapter VII

Women in the Later Renaissance

VII

WOMEN IN THE LATER RENAISSANCE

THE age of Lorenzo de' Medici—that bright fifteenth century—in the history of the Italian peninsula was signalized by such achievement and definite result in the intellectual emancipation of the minds of men, art and poetry were given such an impetus and showed promise of such full fruition, that he who would now conjure up the picture of that fair day is well-nigh lost in wonderment and awe. But in this love of art and worship of the beautiful it soon becomes apparent that pagan influences were stealing into daily life, and that the religion of the Christian Church was fast becoming an empty form which had no value as a rule of conduct. Blind faith in the power of the Vicar of Christ to forgive the sins of this world still remained, and in that one way, perhaps, did the Church manage to exist throughout this period; for men, sinful and irreligious and blasphemous as they certainly were, were none the less so impressed with the possibilities of suffering in a future state that they insisted upon priestly absolution—which they accepted with implicit confidence—before setting out upon their journey into the Unknown. The most terrible crimes were matters of common occurrence and were allowed to go unrebuked, at least by the moral sentiment of the community; adultery was too frequent, murder caused little comment, and incest was not unknown. The

pursuit of pleasure was of no less importance than the pursuit of fame and glory; the Italian idea of honor was in perfect harmony with deceit and treachery and unclean living, and a married woman was considered above reproach so long as she did not allow her acts of infidelity to become known to all the world.

In an age of this kind it cannot be said that the women occupied a position which is to be envied by the women of to-day. It is not to be expected that the women will show themselves better than the men at such a time, and when was there a better opportunity for vice to run riot? The convents of the time were, almost without exception, perfect brothels, and the garb of the virgin nun was shown scant respect—and was entitled to still less. Venice became a modern Corinth, and was a resort for all the profligates of the continent; it was estimated that there were twelve thousand prostitutes within its gates at the beginning of the fifteenth century. A century later, Rome counted no less than seven thousand of these unsavory citizens, and they, with their villainous male confederates, who were ever ready to rob, levy blackmail, or commit murder, did much to make the Holy City almost uninhabitable in the days of Pope Innocent VIII. As Symonds has said, the want of a coördinating principle is everywhere apparent in this Italian civilization; the individual has reached his personal freedom, but he has not yet come to a comprehension of that higher liberty which is law; passions are unbridled, the whim of the moment is an all-compelling power, and the time was yet far in the distance when society could feel itself upon a firm foundation.

From all that can be learned, it appears that women were not treated with any special respect; men were free to indulge in the most ribald conversation in their presence,

and it has yet to be proved that they took offence at this unbecoming liberty. The songs which were composed at Carnival time were dedicated to the ladies especially, and yet in all literature it would be difficult to find anything more indecent. Society was simply in a crude state so far as its ideas of decency and delicacy were concerned, and both men and women were often lacking in what are now considered to be the most elementary notions of propriety. As the men were by far the more active and the more important members of each community, it cannot be said that women were looked upon with equal consideration. The Oriental idea of women in general, as domestic animals whose duty it was to minister to the wants and pleasures of their master and superior, lordly man, was but slowly vanishing, and many centuries of suffering, experience, and education were to intervene before saner and truer notions could prevail. Lorenzo de' Medici, in writing of a beautiful and talented woman, makes the following statement: "Her understanding was superior to her sex, but without the appearance of arrogance or presumption; and she avoided an error too common among women, who, when they think themselves sensible, become for the most part insupportable." It is evident that if women were generally held in as high esteem as men, it is altogether unlikely that the expression "superior to her sex" would have been employed, and the latter part of the sentence leads to the further inference that pretentious and pedantic women of the kind referred to were not altogether uncommon at this time.

No better illustration of the relative position of women in society can be found than in one of the letters received by Lorenzo from his wife, who was a member of the old and proud Orsini family, which was much more aristocratic than his own. She addresses him by the term

Magnifice Conjux, which certainly does not betoken a very great degree of intimacy between husband and wife; and the letter concerns the unbearable conduct of the poet Poliziano, who was then an inmate of their house and the private teacher of their children. It seems that he had persecuted her with his attentions, and she is led to protest against his continued employment. In spite of her protest, however, she meekly adds: "Know, I should say to you, that if you desire him to remain, I shall be very content, although I have endured his uttering to me a thousand villainies. If this is with your permission, I am patient, but I cannot believe such a thing." Lorenzo's behavior upon the receipt of this letter will be of interest and will throw much light upon the question involved. Did he burn with indignation at this story of Poliziano's disgraceful conduct and did he dismiss him from his service forthwith as one unworthy of his trust? By no means. The children were soon after taken away from their mother's supervision and sent off to a villa not far from Florence, where they were put entirely under the control of the man who had just insulted their mother! Furthermore, Boccaccio wrote, at a somewhat earlier date it is true, but in a state of society which differed little from that under discussion, that women were of little real consequence in the world, and that "since but few good ones are to be found among them, they are to be avoided altogether."

The position occupied by women in the eyes of the law is somewhat more difficult to determine, but it may be said with certainty that they took no part in the public duties of life and seem to have manifested no yearnings in that direction. They did not vote or hold public office, and would no doubt have looked inquiringly and without comprehension at anyone who proposed such possibilities.

Women were evidently being shielded and protected as much as possible; property was rarely held by them in their own names, and the laws appear to have been made for the men almost exclusively. It will be remembered, perhaps, that when Dante was banished from Florence, his wife was allowed to continue her residence in that city without molestation, and was even able to save much of their property from confiscation and devote it to the education of their children. Later on, when Carlo Strozzi was sent away in exile, his family was not disturbed in the least, and it was during his absence from the city that his daughter Maddalena was married to Luchino Visconti in the midst of most brilliant ceremonies. Guests were invited from all the north of Italy, there were horseraces and tournaments, and the whole function was one of great pomp and brilliancy. The brothers and grown sons of exiled citizens were never accorded such consideration, and it is but fair to assume that the popular sentiment of the time demanded this exceptional treatment for the women. At one time it was even held to be against the Florentine statutes to banish a woman; in 1497, at the time of a conspiracy to restore the banished Piero de' Medici to power, his sister, though proved to have conspired in equal measure with the men, was not given an equal measure of punishment; she was merely kept in seclusion for a period at the palace of Guglielmo de' Pazzi, and was then set at liberty through the influence of Francesco Valori, to whom it seemed unworthy to lay hands upon a woman.

In the midst of this exciting and excited world, it may well be imagined that the passions were strong and that women of charm and beauty were able to exercise no little influence upon the men who came within their power. Never, perhaps, in the history of modern civilization has the æsthetic instinct of a people been so thoroughly aroused

as it was in Italy at this time, and the almost pagan love of beauty which possessed them led to many extravagances in their sentimental conceptions. As Lorenzo de' Medici was the most powerful and distinguished Italian of his time, so may he be termed its representative lover, for his excursions into the land of sentiment may be considered as typical of his day and generation. The first passion of his heart was purely subjective and artificial, the result of a forcing process which had been induced by the power of brotherly love. It so happened that Lorenzo's brother Giuliano, who was assassinated later by the Pazzi, loved, very tenderly, a lady named Simonetta, reputed to be the most beautiful woman in all Florence; so great was her fame that she was quite generally spoken of as *la bella Simonetta,* and the artist Botticelli, who had an eye for a pretty woman, has left us a portrait which vouches for her charms in no uncertain way. She was but a fragile flower, however, and died in the bloom of youth, mourned by her lover with such genuine grief that, with one impulse, all sought to bring him consolation. Letters of condolence were written in prose and verse, sonnets were fairly showered upon him, and Greek and Latin were used as often as Italian in giving expression to the universal sorrow. But how all this affected Lorenzo, and what inspiration it gave to his muse, he had best relate in his own words, for the tale is not devoid of romance, and he alone can do it justice:

"A young lady of great personal charm happened to die at Florence; and as she had been very generally admired and beloved, so her death was as generally lamented. Nor was this to be marvelled at, for she possessed such beauty and such engaging manners that almost every person who had any acquaintance with her flattered himself that he had obtained the chief place in her affections. Her sad

death excited the extreme regret of her admirers; and as she was carried to the place of burial, with her face uncovered, those who had known her in life pressed about her for a last look at the object of their adoration, and then accompanied her funeral with their tears. On this occasion, all the eloquence and all the wit of Florence were exerted in paying due honors to her memory, both in verse and prose. Among the rest, I, also, composed a few sonnets, and, in order to give them greater effect, I tried to convince myself that I too had been deprived of the object of my love, and to excite in my own mind all those passions which might enable me to move the affections of others."

In this attempt to put himself in the place of another, Lorenzo de' Medici began to wonder how it would seem to have such grief to bear on his own account; and then his thoughts went still further afield, and he found himself speculating as to whether or not another lady could be found of the same merit and beauty as the lamented Simonetta. In the midst of the great number of those who were writing eulogistic poetry in this lady's honor, Lorenzo began to feel that the situation lacked distinction, and he was not slow to realize what great reputation might be acquired by the lucky mortal who could unearth another divinity of equal charm. For some time he tried in vain, and then suddenly success crowned his efforts, and he has told us in what manner. "A public festival was held in Florence, to which all that was noble and beautiful in the city resorted. To this I was brought by some of my companions (I suppose as my destiny led) against my will, for I had for some time past avoided such exhibitions; or if at times I had attended them, it proceeded rather from a compliance with custom than from any pleasure I experienced in them. Among the ladies there assembled,

I saw one of such sweet and charming manners that I could not help saying, as I looked at her, 'If this person were possessed of the delicacy, the understanding, and the accomplishments of her who is lately dead, most certainly she excels her in the charm of her person.' Resigning myself to my passion, I endeavored to discover, if possible, how far her manners and conversation agreed with her appearance; and here I found such an assemblage of extraordinary endowments that it is difficult to say whether she excelled more in person or in mind. Her beauty was, as I have said before, astonishing. She was of a just and proper height. Her complexion was extremely fair, but not pale, blooming, but not ruddy. Her countenance was serious without being severe, mild and pleasant without levity or vulgarity. Her eyes were sparkling, but without indication of pride or conceit. Her whole figure was so finely proportioned that amongst other women she appeared with superior dignity, yet free from the least degree of formality or affectation. In walking or in dancing, or in other exercises which display the person, every motion was elegant and appropriate. Her sentiments were always just and striking and have furnished me material for some of my sonnets; she always spoke at the proper time, and always to the purpose, so that nothing could be added, nothing taken away. . . . To recount all her excellencies would far exceed my present limits, and I shall therefore conclude with affirming that there was nothing which could be desired in a beautiful and accomplished woman which was not in her most abundantly found. By these qualities, I was so captivated that not a power or faculty of my body or mind remained any longer at liberty, and I could not help considering the lady who had died as the star of Venus, which at the approach of the sun is totally overpowered and extinguished."

The name of this wondrous lady is carefully kept in the background by Lorenzo, but from other sources she is known to have been Lucrezia Donati, a lady of noble birth, celebrated for her goodness and beauty, and a member of that same Donati family to which Dante's wife belonged. At the time of this love affair, Lorenzo was about twenty, and the lady was somewhat older, but that made no difference to the young poet, who immediately began to exhibit all those symptoms which have become traditional in such maladies of the heart. He lost his appetite, grew pale, shunned the society of even his dearest friends, took long, solitary walks, and wrote many an ode and sonnet in honor of the fair Donati. But she was indeed a divinity rather than a friend, and his oft-expressed delight in her many charms was rather intellectual than emotional and passionate. She becomes for him, in truth, a very sun of blazing beauty, which he looks upon to admire, but the fire of the lover is entirely wanting. While it was no such mystic attachment as that professed by Dante for Beatrice, it no doubt resembles it from certain points of view, as, in each case, the lover has little actual acquaintance with the object of his affections. But there this comparison must end, for it has been explained how Dante derived a certain moral and spiritual benefit from his early brooding love, and in the more modern instance nothing of the kind is apparent. On the contrary, everything seems to show that Lorenzo was at an age when his "fancy lightly turned to thoughts of love," and, being of a poetic temperament, he amused himself by writing amorous poetry which came from the head and not the heart. The characteristic traits of this poetry, then, are grace and elegance, sonority and rhythm; it lacks sincerity and that impetuous flow of sentiment which is generally indicative of intense feeling. It cannot be denied,

however, that he often reached a high plane; perhaps the following lines show him at his best:

"Quale sopra i nevosi ed alti monti
Apollo spande il suo bel lume adorno,
Tal' i crin suoi sopra la bianca gonna!
Il tempo e'l luogo non ch'io conti,
Che dov'è si bel sole è sempre giorno;
E Paradiso, ov'è si bella Donna!"

[As Apollo sheds his golden beams over the snowy summits of the lofty mountains, so flowed her golden tresses over her gown of white. But I need not note the time and place, for where shines so fair a sun it can be naught but day, and where dwells my lady fair can be but Paradise!]

While still preoccupied with what Mrs. Jameson terms his visions of love and poetry, he was called upon by his father, at the age of twenty-one, to marry, for political reasons, a woman whom he had never seen—Clarice Orsini. That the marriage was unexpected is attested by a note in his diary to this effect: "I, Lorenzo, took to wife, Donna Clarice Orsini, or rather she was given to me," on such and such a day. The ceremony was performed in Naples, it appears, but the wedding festivities were celebrated in Florence, and never was there a more brilliant scene in all the city's history. The fête began on a Sunday morning and lasted until midday of the Tuesday following, and for that space of time almost the entire population was entertained and fed by the Medici. On this occasion the wedding presents took a practical turn, in part, for, from friends and from some of the neighboring villages subject to the rule of Florence, supplies were sent in great quantities; among the number, record is made of eight hundred calves and two thousand pairs of chickens! There were music and dancing by day and by night;

musicians were stationed in various parts of the city, and about them the dancers filled the streets. An adequate conception of this scene will perhaps be a matter of some difficulty, but those who know something of the way in which the people in modern Paris dance upon the smooth pavements on the night of the national holiday, the Quatorze Juillet, will possess at least a faint idea of what it must have been. That all classes of the population were cared for at this great festival is proved by the fact that one hundred kegs of wine were consumed daily, and that five thousand pounds of sweetmeats and candies were distributed among the people.

The marriage of the poet Ariosto with the beautiful Alessandra Strozzi, widow of Tito Strozzi, a noble Florentine who was famed in his day for his Latin poetry, was not concluded with any such display and magnificence, the author of the *Orlando Furioso* being in no position which made it necessary for him to entertain the whole population, and having ideas all his own regarding the advantage of publicity in such matters. Long before Ariosto's marriage, however, in the days of his youth and before he had ever set eyes upon the Titian-haired Alessandra, he fell captive to the charms of Ginevra Lapi, a young girl of Florentine family, who lived at or near Mantua. He met her first at a *festa di ballo,* we are told, and there he was much impressed with her grace and beauty, for she seemed like a young goddess among her less favored companions. Then began that attachment which lasted for long years and which seems to have inspired much of his earlier lyric poetry. Four years after their first meeting he writes that she was "dearer to him than his own soul and fairer than ever in his eyes," and she seems to have made a very strong impression upon his mind, as he mentions her long afterward with most genuine tenderness. What more

than this may be said of Ginevra Lapi has not yet come to light, and it is due to the poet alone that her name has been handed down to posterity. If Ariosto had been an expansive and communicative man, we might know far more than we do of Ginevra and of the other friends of his youth, for he was a person of most impressionable nature, who was very susceptible to the allurements of beautiful women, and there is no doubt of the fact that he had a certain compelling charm which made him almost irresistible with the ladies of his *entourage*. However, the history of his affairs of the heart has baffled all investigators as yet, because the poet, from the very earliest days of his youth, made it a rule never to boast of his conquests or to speak of his friends in any public way. As a symbol of this gallant rule of conduct, there is still preserved at Ferrara one of Ariosto's inkstands, which is ornamented with a little bronze Cupid, finger upon lip in token of silence.

Early biographers and literary historians were inclined to give to Ginevra Lapi all credit for the more serious inspiration which prompted him to write the major part of his amatory verse, and so careful had he been to conceal the facts that it was not until many years after his death that his marriage to Alessandra Strozzi was generally known. Ariosto had been on a visit to Rome in the year 1515, and, on his return, he chanced to stop at Florence, where he intended to spend three or four days during the grand festival which was being held in honor of Saint John the Baptist. Arriving just in time to be present at some social function of importance, the poet there saw for the first time this lady who was to mean so much to him for all the rest of his life. It will be remembered that when Lorenzo de' Medici first met Lucrezia Donati he had been taken to some evening company, much against his will.

In the present instance, it was the lady who showed disinclination to go into society, and her recent widowhood gave her good reason for her feeling in the matter; but, won over by the entreaties of her friends, *da preghi vinta,* she finally consented to go. What she wore and how she looked, and how she bore herself, and much more, do we know from Ariosto's glowing lines which were written in commemoration of this event. Her gown was of black, all embroidered with bunches of grapes and grape leaves in purple and gold. Her luxuriant blond hair, the *richissima capellatura bionda,* was gathered in a net behind and, parted in the middle, fell to her shoulders in long curls on either side of her face; and on her forehead, just where the hair was parted, she wore a twig of laurel, cunningly wrought in gold and precious stones.

Alessandra's most effective charm was her wonderful hair, of that color which had been made famous by the pictures of Titian and Giorgione, and it really seems that in Ariosto's time this color was so ardently desired that hair dyes were in common use, especially in Venice. It is with a feeling of some regret that we are led to reflect that much of that gorgeous hair which we have admired for so many years in the famous paintings of the Venetian masters may be artificial in its brilliant coloring, but such, alas! is probably the case. The fair Alessandra, nevertheless, had no need to resort to the dye pots of Venice, as Mother Nature had been generous in the extreme, and the poet was inspired by the truth, if the painters of the time were not. How unfortunate, then, that a serious illness was the means of her being shorn of this crowning glory! Her attending physician decided upon one occasion that it would be necessary to cut her hair to save her life, but later events proved that he had been over anxious and that this desperate remedy had been entirely uncalled for.

Ariosto, as may well be believed, was indignant at the sacrifice, and wrote three sonnets regarding it before he cooled his anger. In one of these passionate protests occur the following lines, which will give some idea of his highly colored style and at the same time show us what an important place Alessandra Strozzi must have held in his affections: "When I think, as I do a thousand times a day, upon those golden tresses, which neither wisdom nor necessity but hasty folly tore, alas! from that fair head, I am enraged, my cheeks burn with anger, even tears gush forth bathing my face and bosom. I would die, could I but be avenged upon the impious stupidity of that rash hand. O Love, if such wrong goes unpunished, thine be the reproach! . . . Wilt thou suffer the loveliest and dearest of thy possessions to be boldly ravished and yet bear it in silence?"

Though Ariosto had come to Florence to spend but a summer day or two at Saint John's feast, his visit lengthened into weeks, and full six months had rolled around before he could tear himself away after that first eventful evening. As his time was spent with his friend Vespucci, Alessandra's brother-in-law, he had ample opportunity to bask in her smiles without exciting unfavorable comment; and when he finally did depart, he left his heart behind him. From that day until the time of his death it was known that he loved her, but their names were never coupled in any scandalous way, and it was only after the death of the poet that the fact was known that they had been secretly married. No one has been able to give the exact date of this marriage, but there is now little doubt with regard to the fact itself, and certain evidence leads to the conclusion that the wedding must have taken place in the year 1522. Why this matter was kept a secret has given rise to much speculation, for it would appear to

the superficial observer that a public acknowledgment of the fact might have been a matter of pride to either the poet or the Signora Strozzi. Family reasons have been alleged by Baruffaldi, one of Ariosto's many biographers, but they seem entirely inadequate and unsatisfactory, and the whole matter still remains shrouded in mystery.

One side of the question which has not perhaps been presented before is this—would there have been any change in the tone of Ariosto's lyric verse if Alessandra had been known to all the world as his wife? With the possible exceptions of the Brownings and one or two others, the case is hardly recorded where a poet has been inspired to his highest efforts by his wedded wife, and it is extremely problematical whether or not in the present instance the fire and fervor of Ariosto's lines could have been kindled at a domestic hearth which all the world might see. The secret marriage was probably insisted upon by the wife, and all honor to Alessandra Strozzi for her pure heart in that corrupt time! But the fact was probably kept hidden to gratify some whim of the poet. The very situation is tinged with the romantic, the old adage about stolen sweets was undoubtedly as true in that time as it is to-day, and the poet had a restless nature which could ill brook the ordinary yoke of Hymen. So long as he could live in the Via Mirasole, and Alessandra in the stately Casa Strozzi, Ferrara had charms for him, and his muse was all aflame. Would this have been true if one roof had sheltered them?

Whatever the verdict may be in this matter, the fact remains that all of Ariosto's lyric poetry and many of the passages in the *Orlando Furioso* were inspired by his real love for some woman, and it was this living, burning passion which gives him his preëminence as a poet. He had mannerisms, it is true, and much that he wrote is apt

to appear stilted to the ordinary English reader, but such mannerisms are only the national characteristics of most Italian poetry and must be viewed in that light. On the other hand, Ariosto's evident sincerity is in striking contrast to the cold, intellectual, amatory verse of Lorenzo de' Medici, which was, in truth, but an æsthetic diversion for that brilliant prince. And even this was due to the inspiration he received from the sight of a fair lady, many years his senior, for whom he had a most distant, formal, Platonic affection, while it never dawned upon him that his own wife's beauty might deserve a sonnet now and then.

Chapter VIII

The Borgias and the Bad Women of the Sixteenth Century

VIII

THE BORGIAS AND THE BAD WOMEN OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

THINGS went from bad to worse, as is their habit, and Italian life in the sixteenth century shows an increasing corruption and a laxity in public morals which were but the natural result of the free-thinking Renaissance. The Church had completely lost its influence as the spiritual head of Europe, and had become but a hypocritical principality, greedy for temporal power, and openly trafficking in ecclesiastical offices which were once supposed to belong by right to men of saintly lives; it is probable that this barefaced profligacy of the papal court was responsible for the widespread moral inertia which was characteristic of the time. The pontiff's chair at the dawn of this century was filled by Roderigo Borgia, known as Alexander VI., and it may well be said that his career of crime and lust gave the keynote to the society which was to follow him. By means of most open bribery he had been elected to his office, but, in spite of these well-known facts, his advent was hailed with great joy and his march to the Vatican was a veritable triumph. Contemporary historians unite in praising him at this time in his career, for as a cardinal he had been no worse in his immoralities than many of his colleagues; and he was a man of commanding presence and marked abilities, who seemed to embody the easy grace and indifference of his day. It was said of him as he rode

to assume the mantle of Saint Peter: "He sits upon a snow-white horse, with serene forehead, with commanding dignity. How admirable is the mild composure of his mien! how noble his countenance! his glance—how free!" And it was said that the heroic beauty of his whole body was given him by Nature in order that he might adorn the seat of the Apostles with his divine form, in the place of God! What blasphemy this was! but it shows the moral level of the day. His intercourse with Vanozza Catanei was open and notorious, and she was the mother of that Lucrezia Borgia whose ill repute is dying a hard death in the face of modern attempts at rehabilitation. His liaison with Giulia Farnese, known as *la bella Giulia,* the lawful wife of Orsino Orsini, was no less conspicuous, and these two women had a great influence upon him throughout his whole lifetime. It had already been said of him: "He is handsome, of a most glad countenance and joyous aspect, gifted with honeyed and choice eloquence; the beautiful women on whom he casts his eyes are charmed to love him, and he moves them in a wondrous way, more powerfully than the magnet influences iron;" but this seduction in his manner cannot be considered as merely an innocent result of his great personal beauty, because his lustful disposition is well proved, and sensuality was always his greatest vice. Symonds makes the statement that within the sacred walls of the Vatican he maintained a harem in truly Oriental fashion; and here were doubtless sent, from all parts of the papal states, those daughters of Venus who were willing to minister to the joys of His Holiness. To cap the climax, imagine the effrontery of a pope who dared, in the face of the ecclesiastical rule enjoining celibacy upon the priesthood, to parade his delinquencies before the eyes of all the world, and seat himself in state, for a solemn pageant at Saint Peter's, with his daughter

Lucrezia upon one side of his throne and his daughter-in-law Sancia upon the other! It was once said by a witty and epigrammatic Italian that Church affairs were so corrupt that the interests of morality demanded the marriage rather than the celibacy of the clergy, and it would appear that this remark has a certain pertinency anent the present situation. To illustrate in what way such delinquency was made a matter of jest, the following story is related. At the time of the French invasion, during the early days of Alexander's pontificate, Giulia and Girolama Farnese, two members of what we perhaps may call the pope's domestic circle, were captured, together with their duenna, Adriana di Mila, by a certain Monseigneur d'Allegre, who was in the suite of the French king. He came upon them near Capodimonte and carried them off to Montefiascone, where they were placed in confinement; while Alexander was notified of the occurrence and told that he must pay a ransom, the sum being fixed at three thousand ducats. This amount was paid instanter, and the captives were at once released. As they approached Rome, they were met by Alexander, who was attired as a layman, in black and gold brocade, with his dagger at his belt. When Ludovico Sforza heard what had happened, he remarked, with a smile, that the ransom was much too small, and that if the sum of fifty thousand ducats had been demanded it would have been paid with equal readiness, as these ladies were known to be "the very eyes and heart" of the Holy Father.

It was in the midst of this wanton court that the yellow-haired Lucrezia Borgia grew up to womanhood, subject to all the baleful influences which were in such profusion about her. Associating, perforce, with the dissolute women of her father's household, it would be too much to expect to find her a woman uncontaminated by the ways of the

world. There are many things to show that she had her father's love, and dark stories have been whispered regarding his overfondness for her; but, be that as it may, it is certain that Alexander never neglected an opportunity to give his daughter worldly advancement. Before his accession to the pontificate, Lucrezia had been formally promised to a couple of Spanish grandees, Don Cherubino Juan de Centelles and Don Gasparo da Procida, who was a son of the Count of Aversa; but once in the Vatican, with the papal power in his hands, Alexander grew more ambitious, and looked for another alliance, which might give him an increased political power. Then come three marriages in which the daughter Lucrezia seems but a puppet in her father's hands. First, she was married to Giovanni Sforza, Lord of Pesaro, but differences of opinion regarding politics and the pope's desire for a still more powerful son-in-law led him to sanction Lucrezia's divorce; she was then promptly married to Alphonso, Prince of Biseglia, a natural son of the King of Naples. When Alphonso's father was deposed, the Borgias grew tired of the prince, and caused him to be stabbed one fine day on the very steps of Saint Peter's. Then, as he showed some disinclination to give up the ghost, he was strangled as he lay in his bed by Michellozzo, the trusted villain of the Borgia household. The year following, Lucrezia found another spouse, and this time it was Alphonso, the Crown Prince of Ferrara. The marriage was celebrated by means of a proxy, in Rome, and then the daughter of the pope, with cardinals and prelates in her train, set out on a triumphal journey across the country. She travelled with much pomp and ceremony, as was befitting one of her position in the world, and on her arrival in Ferrara she was welcomed with most elaborate ceremonies. This marriage had been forced upon the house of Este through political necessity, and the young

duke-to-be, Alphonso, had looked forward to it with no pleasure, hence the wedding by proxy; but Lucrezia, by her charm and tact, soon won the affection of her husband and drew about her a most distinguished company of poets and scholars, all of whom were enthusiastic in singing her praise. Ariosto and the two Strozzi were there, likewise the Cardinal Bembo—who became a somewhat too ardent admirer—and Aldo Manuzio, and other men of distinction. Though of commonplace origin, Lucrezia had received the very best education possible, and she conducted herself with such propriety and showed such ready wit that she was the real centre of her literary coterie and gave little, if any, outward evidence of that immoral and dissolute character with which she had been credited in her earlier days. There can be no doubt that the corrupt influences which surrounded her in her girlhood early destroyed her purity of mind and led her to dissolute practices, but the legend which has grown up about her, filled with fearful stories of poison and murder, has been much exaggerated. A sensual woman she was, but she has had to suffer for many crimes which were committed by her father and her brother, Cæsar Borgia; and while she was undoubtedly bad in many ways, the time has passed when she can justly be considered as a fiend incarnate.

With the high priest of all Christendom a man whose hands were stained with blood and whose private life was marred by every vice, it is not surprising that in all parts of Italy the annals of this time are tainted and polluted in every way. Apparently, all restraint was thrown aside, the noblest families seemed to vie with each other in crime and debauchery, and the pages of history are filled with countless awful iniquities. Among the Medici alone, there is a record of eleven family murders within the short space of fifty years, and seven of these were caused by

illicit love! With that lack of logic which sometimes, under similar circumstances, characterizes the actions of men to-day, these Italians of the sixteenth century were not willing that their sisters and wives should debase themselves by dishonorable conduct, no matter what they might do themselves, and when the women were found guilty there was no punishment too severe for them. Thus, Eleanora di Toledo was hacked to pieces by her husband Pietro de' Medici, and his sister Isabella was strangled by her husband the Duke di Bracciano, with the consent of her brothers.

Isabella dead, the duke was free to marry Vittoria Accoramboni,—in no way his equal in rank, for he was an Orsini,—who was a woman totally devoid of all moral sense —if she is to be judged by her acts. She had been wedded to Francesco Peretti, but, tiring of him and seeing the opportunity for marriage with the duke, she and her mother plotted the husband's death, and it was her handsome and unscrupulous brother who did the deed. Despite the pope's opposition, the marriage was consummated, but the guilty pair were not allowed to remain unmolested for a long time, as Vittoria was soon arrested and tried for complicity in her first husband's murder. While thus under arrest, she lived in great state and entertained in a most lavish way, and seemed in no way abashed by her position. Though finally acquitted, she was ordered by the court to leave the duke and lead henceforth a life which might be above suspicion. Through the brother Marcello and his constant companion, who is continually alluded to as the "Greek enchantress," the duke and his wife were soon brought together again; they were again married, that the succession might be assured to Vittoria. Indeed, they were twice married with this purpose in view, but they were so scorned by the members of the duke's own family and

so harassed by the pope's officers, who were ever threatening prosecution, that their life was one of constant care and anxiety. When the duke finally died, Vittoria was left his sole heir, though the will was disputed by Ludovico Orsini, the next in succession. Vittoria was spending her first few months of widowhood in the Orsini palace at Padua, when one night the building was entered by forty men, all masked in black, who came with murderous intent. Marcello, the infamous brother, escaped their clutches; another brother, much younger and innocent of all crime, was shot in the shoulder and driven to his sister's room, where he thought to find shelter; there they saw Vittoria, calmly kneeling at her *prie-dieu,* rosary in hand, saying her evening prayers. As the story goes, she flung herself before a crucifix, but all in vain, for she was stabbed in the heart, one assassin turning the knife to make death absolutely certain. She died saying, it is reported: "Jesus, I forgive you!" The next day, when the deed was noised abroad, and the corpse of Vittoria was exposed to the public gaze, her beauty, even in death, appealed to the Paduans; and they at once rushed to Ludovico's palace, believing him guilty of the crime or responsible for it in some way. The place was besieged, an intercepted letter revealed the fact that Ludovico had killed Vittoria with his own hand, and when the place was finally reduced and surrender inevitable, the noble assassin coolly gave up his arms, and then began to trim his finger-nails with a small pair of scissors, which he took from his pocket, as if nothing had happened. It is evident that, having accomplished his revenge upon this woman who had sullied the name of his family, he was now content to take whatever fate might come; and when he was strangled in prison, by order of the republic of Venice, he went to his fathers like a brave man, without a sigh or tremor.

The story of Violante di Cordona exhibits the same disregard for moral law and the same calm acceptance of death. As the Duchess of Palliano and wife of Don Giovanni Caraffa, this beautiful woman was much courted at her palace in Naples, where she lived in a most sumptuous way with crowds of courtiers and admirers about her. Through the jealousy of Diana Brancaccio, one of her ladies in waiting, who is described as "hot-tempered and tawny-haired," the fair duchess was doomed to a sad fate, and all on account of the handsome Marcello Capecce, who had been her most ardent suitor. In Mrs. Linton's words, "his love for Violante was that half religious, half sensual passion which now writes sonnets to my lady as a saint, and now makes love to her as a courtesan." But, whatever his mode of procedure, Diana loved him, while he loved only Violante, and he proved to be a masterful man. The duke was away in exile on account of a disgraceful carouse which had ended in a street fight, and Violante was spending the time, practically alone, in the quiet little town of Gallese, which is halfway between Orvieto and Rome. In this solitude, Violante and Marcello were finally surprised under circumstances which made their guilt certain, and final confession was obtained from Marcello after he had been arrested and subjected to torture. Thereupon the duke sought him out in his prison, and stabbed him and threw his body into the prison sewer. The pope, Paul IV., was the duke's uncle; and upon being told what his nephew had done, he showed no surprise, but asked significantly: "And what have they done with the duchess?" Murder, under such circumstances, was considered justifiable throughout all Italy—and it must be confessed that the modern world knows something of this sentiment. On one occasion, a Florentine court made this reply to a complaint which had been

lodged against a faithless wife: *Essendo vero quanto scriveva facesse quello che conveniva a cavaliere di honore!* [Things being true as he has written them, he is allowed to do that which is befitting a gentleman of honor!] It was not the pope alone who proposed punishment for Violante, for the duke had a brother, Cardinal Alfonso Caraffa, who spoke of it continually, and finally, in the month of August, in the year 1559, Palliano sent fifty men, with Violante's brother, the Count Aliffe, at their head, to go to her at Gallese and put her to death. A couple of Franciscan monks gave her what little comfort there was to be extracted from the situation, and she received the last sacrament, though stoutly protesting her innocence the while. Then the bandage was put over her eyes, and her brother prepared to place about her neck the cord with which she was to be strangled; finding it too short for the purpose, he went into another room to get one of more suitable length. Before he had disappeared through the doorway, Violante had pulled the bandage from her eyes, and was asking, in the most matter-of-fact way, what the trouble was and why he did not complete his task. With great courtesy, he informed his sister what he was about, and a moment later returned, tranquilly readjusted bandage and cord, and then, fitting his dagger hilt into a loop at the back, he slowly twisted it about until the soul of the duchess had fled. Not a harsh or hasty word was spoken, there was no hurry and no confusion, all was done quietly and in order. The marvel is that these highly emotional people, who are usually so sensitive to pain, could have shown such stoical indifference to their fate.

The case of Beatrice Cenci is one of the best known in all this category of crime, and here again is shown that sublime fortitude which cannot fail to excite our sympathy, to some degree at least. Francesco Cenci was a wealthy

nobleman of such profligate habits and such evil ways that he had twice been threatened with imprisonment for his crimes. Seven children he had by his first marriage, and at his wife's death he married Lucrezia Petroni, by whom he had no children. Francesco had no love for his sons and daughters, and treated them with such uniform cruelty that he soon drove from their hearts any filial affection they may have felt for him. His conduct grew so outrageous that finally, in desperation, his family appealed to the pope for relief, begging that Cenci be put to death, so that they might live in peace; but the pontiff, who had already profited by Cenci's wealth and saw further need for his gold, refused to comply with so unusual a request, and made matters so much the worse by allowing the father to find out what a desperate course the children had adopted. One of the two daughters was finally married, and Cenci was compelled by the pope to give her a suitable *dot;* but Beatrice still remained at home, and the father kept her in virtual imprisonment that she might not escape him and cause him expense as the other girl had done. The indignities heaped upon her and upon the wife and sons were such that they all revolted at last and plotted to take his life. Cardinal Guerra, a young prelate, who, it seems, was in the habit of visiting the house in Cenci's absence, and who may have been in love with Beatrice, was taken into the secret and all the details were arranged. Two old servants, who had no love for their harsh master, were prevailed upon to do the deed, and were secretly admitted by Beatrice to the castle known as the Rock of Petrella, where Cenci had taken his family for the summer months—all this was in the year 1598. The father's wine had been drugged so that he fell into a deep sleep, and again it was Beatrice who took the assassins into the room where he lay. At first they held back,

saying that they could not kill a man in his slumber; but Beatrice would not allow them to abandon the task, so great was her power over them.

Beatrice has shown all along a surprising firmness of character, and a more detailed description of her appearance cannot fail to be of interest. Leigh Hunt gives the following pen portrait, which he ascribes to some Roman manuscript: "Beatrice was of a make rather large than small. Her complexion was fair. She had two dimples in her cheeks, which added to the beauty of her countenance, especially when she smiled, and gave it a grace that enchanted all who saw her. Her hair was like threads of gold; and because it was very long, she used to fasten it up; but when she let it flow freely, the wavy splendor of it was astonishing. She had pleasing blue eyes, of a sprightliness mixed with dignity, and, in addition to all these graces, her conversation had a spirit in it and a sparkling polish which made every one in love with her."

Such was the girl who overcame the compassion of these hirelings by recounting to them again the story of their own wrongs and those of the family; and when they still refused, she said: "If you are afraid to put to death a man in his sleep, I myself will kill my father; but your own lives shall not have long to run." So, in they went, and the deed was done in a terrible manner: a long, pointed nail was thrust through one of the eyes and into the brain and then withdrawn, and the body was tossed from an upper balcony into the branches of an elder tree below, that it might seem that he had fallen while walking about in the night. The murderers were given the reward agreed upon, and, in addition, Beatrice bestowed upon the one who had been least reluctant a mantle laced with gold, which had formerly belonged to her father. The next day,

when Francesco Cenci's body was discovered, there was pretence of great grief in the household, and the dead man was given most elaborate burial. After a short time, the family went back to Rome and lived there in tranquillity, until they were startled one day by accusations which charged them with the death of the father. Indignant denials were made by all, and especially by Beatrice, but in vain; they were submitted to torture, and the shameful truth was finally confessed. The pope at first ordered them to be beheaded; but so great was the interest taken in the case by cardinals and members of the nobility, that a respite of twenty-five days was granted in which to prepare a defence. The ablest advocates in Rome interested themselves in the matter, and, when the case was called, the pope listened to the arguments for four hours. The plan of defence was to compare the wrongs of the father with those of the children, and to see which had suffered the more. The larger share of responsibility was put upon Beatrice; but she, it appeared, had been the one most sinned against, and certain unmentionable villainies in her father's conduct, which were darkly hinted at, aroused the pity of the Holy Father to such an extent that he gave them all comparative liberty, with the hope of ultimate acquittal. At this juncture of affairs, a certain nobleman, Paolo Santa Croce, killed his mother as the result of a family quarrel; and the pope, newly angered against the Cenci family because he considered it to have set the example for this parricidal mania, ordered them all to be executed according to the terms of the original judgment, with the exception of the youngest son, Bernardo, who was given a free pardon. The sentence was executed on the following day, Saturday, May 11, 1599, on the bridge of Saint Angelo, the three victims being Lucrezia the wife, Beatrice, and the older brother, Giacomo, all the

other sons excepting Bernardo being dead at this time. Part of the Cenci estates were conveyed to one of the pope's nephews, and became the Villa Borghese, wherein may still be seen portraits of Lucrezia Petroni and Beatrice Cenci, the latter by the well-known Guido Reni. It is generally believed that this portrait was painted while Beatrice was in prison, and Shelley has given the following appreciative description of it in the preface to his tragedy, *The Cenci,* which is based upon this story, and which he wrote in Rome in 1819:

"There is a fixed and pale composure upon the features, she seems sad and stricken down in spirit, yet the despair thus expressed is lightened by the patience of gentleness. Her head is bound with folds of white drapery, from which the yellow strings of her golden hair escape and fall about her neck. The moulding of her face is exquisitely delicate, the eyebrows are distinct and arched, the lips have that permanent meaning of imagination and sensibility which suffering has not repressed and which it seems as if death scarcely could extinguish. Her forehead is large and clear, her eyes, which we are told were remarkable for their vivacity, are swollen with weeping and lustreless, but beautifully tender and serene. In the whole mien there are simplicity and dignity which, united with her exquisite loveliness and deep sorrow, are inexpressibly pathetic. Beatrice Cenci appears to have been one of those rare persons in whom energy and gentleness dwell together without destroying one another; her nature was simple and profound. The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation in the scene of the world."

To-day, the story is still an oft-told tale in Rome, the portrait of *la Cenci* is known by all, and all feel pity for

her sad fate. However great her crime may have been, it should be taken into account that it was only after "long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination, both of mind and body,"—as Shelley puts it,—that she plotted the murder for which she was beheaded; so great was the provocation, that all can pity if pardon be withheld.

The corrupt condition of life in the convents throughout Italy at this time is not a matter of mere conjecture, for the facts are known in many cases and are of such a nature as almost to pass belief. One reason for this state of affairs is to be found in the character of the women who composed these conventual orders. It is natural to think of them as holy maidens of deep religious instincts, who had taken the veil to satisfy some spiritual necessity of their being; unfortunately, the picture is untrue. In many of these convents, and particularly in those where vice was known to flourish, the membership was largely recruited from the ranks of the nobility, it being the custom to send unmarried, unmarriageable, and unmanageable daughters to the shelter of a cloister, simply to get them out of the way. Women who had transgressed, to their own disgrace, the commonly accepted social laws, whether married or unmarried, found ready protection here; a professed nun was under the care of the Church and had nothing to fear from the state, and this fact was not unknown. To show how clearly this condition was understood at the time, it is interesting to note that when the scandal concerning the convent of Santa Chiara was first made public, an easy-going priest, who had acted as a go-between in many of these intrigues of the cloister, said that he could not see why people in general should create so much confusion about it, as these were only "affairs of the gentlefolk [*cosi di gentilhuomini*]"!

The public disgrace of Santa Chiara was due to the evil ways of one of its members, Sister Umilia, a woman who had had some experience in worldly things before she turned her back upon them. Her name was Lucrezia Malpigli, and, as a young girl, she had loved and desired to marry Massimiliano Arnolfini; but her parents objected, and she was affianced to the three Buonvisi brothers in consecutive order before she finally found a husband, the two older brothers dying each time before the wedding ceremony. After her marriage, to her misfortune, she met, at Lucca, Arnolfini, the man whom she had loved as a girl at Ferrara, and it soon appeared that the old love was not dead. Within a short time her husband was stabbed, by Arnolfini's bravo, as he was returning with her from the church, and rumors were at once afloat implicating her in the murder. Guilty or not, she was frightened, and before four days had passed she had taken refuge in the convent of Santa Chiara. Safe from all pursuit, she endowed the convent most liberally, cut her hair, and became the Sister Umilia, who was described as a "young woman, tall and pale, dressed in a nun's habit, with a crown upon her head." For thirteen years little was heard of her, and then a telltale rope ladder hanging from the convent wall led to disclosures of a most revolting nature. It was discovered that the supposedly pious nuns were profligates, the convent was a veritable den of iniquity, and Sister Umilia was found to have several lovers who were disputing her favors. Poisons had been sent to her by a young nobleman, Tommaso Samminiati, that she might dispose of a certain Sister Calidonia, who had become repentant and was threatening to reveal the secrets of their life; and the poisons were so deadly, so the letter ran, that when once Calidonia had swallowed a certain white powder, "if the devil does not help her, she will

pass from this life in half a night's time, and without the slightest sign of violence." Penalties were inflicted upon all of these offending nuns, and Umilia was imprisoned for nine years before she was restored to liberty and allowed to wear again the convent dress.

However black this picture may appear, it is passing fair when compared with the career of the notorious Lady of Monza. Virginia Maria de Leyva was a lady of noble birth who had entered the convent of Santa Margherita, at Monza, where she had taken the veil, being induced to take this step because her cousin had in some way deprived her of her inheritance, and without a dowry she had not found marriage easy. In the convent, because she was well born and well connected, she became a person of much influence and received many callers. Adjoining the convent was the residence of young Gianpaolo Osio, a reckless, amorous dare-devil, who was *beau comme le jour,* as the French fairy tales say. So much of the story having been told, it is not difficult to guess what is to come. It was a case of love at first sight, and Osio was aided in his conquest by a number of the older and more corrupt nuns and several other people about the convent, not excepting the father confessor, who wrote some of Osio's love letters and seemed to smile upon the affair and wish it all success. Virginia yielded, as might have been expected under such circumstances; and the amour ran along smoothly for several years, until Virginia and Osio, with the help of four obliging nuns, felt constrained to take the life of a disgruntled serving-maid who was threatening to reveal all to Monsignor Barca, the inspector of the convent, at the time of his approaching visit. When once the deed was done, the corpse was dismembered for purposes of better concealment; but suspicion was aroused by this sudden disappearance of the maid, and Osio took

Virginia from the place, to shield her as much as possible. Next, he offered to help her two most active accomplices, Ottavia and Benedetta, to escape and seek refuge in a Bergamasque convent, where they would be safe; but on the way thither he treacherously assaulted them and left them both for dead. One crime rarely covers up another, however; the facts soon came to light, and all concerned were fitly punished. Virginia was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment in the convent of Santa Valeria, at Milan; and there she remained for many years, in a dark cell, until she was finally given better quarters through the interposition of Cardinal Borromeo, who had been impressed by her growing reputation for sanctity. How old she grew to be, deponent saith not, but she must have lived for many years, as the following description will attest: "a bent old woman, tall of stature, dried and fleshless, but venerable in her aspect, whom no one could believe to have been once a charming and immodest beauty."

What an awful century it was! Vice and corruption in all quarters, the pope an acknowledged sinner, the nobility tainted, and even the holy daughters of the Church virgins in name only! And this was the century in which the most beautiful Madonnas were painted!

Chapter IX

The Brighter Side of the Sixteenth Century

IX

THE BRIGHTER SIDE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

THE tales of crime and sensuality which fill the annals of the sixteenth century are so repulsive that it is with a feeling of relief that we turn our attention to other pictures of the same time which are altogether pleasing in their outlines. The court of the Duke of Urbino is the most conspicuous example of this better side of life, and his talented and accomplished wife, Elizabetta Gonzaga, a daughter of the reigning house of Mantua, presided over a literary salon which was thronged with all the wit and wisdom of the land. Urbino was but a rocky, desolate bit of mountainous country, not more than forty miles square, in the Marches of Ancona, on a spur of the Tuscan Apennines, about twenty miles from the Adriatic and not far from historic Rimini, but here was a most splendid principality with a glittering court. Federigo, Count of Montefeltro, had been created Duke of Urbino by Pope Sixtus IV. in 1474, and he it was who laid the foundations for that prosperous state which at his death passed into the hands of his son Guidobaldo, the husband of Elizabetta. Federigo's immense wealth was not gained by burdening his subjects with heavy taxes, but rather from the money which he was able to earn as a military leader, for he was a noble soldier of fortune. Vespasiano

tells us, with regard to his military science, that he was excelled by no general of his time, and his good faith was never questioned. He was also a man of singularly religious nature, and no morning passed without his hearing mass upon his knees. In his lifetime he served no less than three pontiffs, two kings of Naples, and two dukes of Milan; the republic of Florence and several Italian leagues had appointed him their general in the field, and in this long life of warfare the sums of money paid him for his services were immense. Dennistoun relates that in the year 1453 "his war-pay from Alfonso of Naples exceeded eight thousand ducats a month, and for many years he had from him and his son an annual peace-pension of six thousand ducats in the name of past services. At the close of his life, when general of the Italian league, he drew, in war, one hundred and sixty-five thousand ducats of annual stipend, forty-five thousand being his own share." With this wealth he caused his desert-like domain to rejoice and blossom as the rose. His magnificent fortified palace was most elaborately decorated with rare marbles and priceless carvings, frescos, panel pictures, tapestries, tarsia work, stucco reliefs, and works of art of all kinds; here, according to his biographer Muzio, he maintained a suite so numerous and distinguished as to rival that of any royal household. So famed indeed did Urbino become, that all the chivalry of Italy crowded the palace to learn manners and the art of war from its courteous duke.

Further details are furnished by Vespasiano, who says that "his household, which consisted of five hundred mouths entertained at his own cost, was governed less like a company of soldiers than a strict religious community. There was no gaming or swearing, but the men conversed with the utmost sobriety." It is interesting to know that among his court officers were included

forty-five counts of the duchy and of other states, seventeen gentlemen, five secretaries, four teachers of grammar, logic, and philosophy, fourteen clerks in public offices, five architects and engineers, five readers during meals, and four transcribers of manuscripts. Federigo had ever shown himself a liberal and enlightened monarch, and he had early acquired a solid culture which enabled him, when he grew to manhood, to bestow his patronage in an intelligent manner. Scholars and artists were clustered about him in great numbers; Urbino was widely known as the Italian Athens, and as one of the foremost centres of art and literature in all Europe, when Elizabetta Gonzaga was wedded to Guidobaldo and became the chatelaine of the palace. The young duke and his wife began their life together under the most auspicious circumstances. From what his tutor, Odasio of Padua, says about his boyhood, it is evident that if he were alive to-day he could easily obtain one of the Cecil Rhodes Oxford fellowships, for we are told that he cared only for study and for manly sports, and that he was of an upright character. His memory was so retentive that he could repeat whole books, word for word, after many years, and in more ways than one he had displayed a wonderful precocity. Elizabetta, too, had been given a most liberal and careful education, and her ready intelligence was equalled only by her careful tact and her perfect *savoir faire*. Indeed, on account of her many attainments, personal charm, and her refining influence, which was far-reaching, she may be likened to that celebrated Frenchwoman Catherine de Vivonne, Madame de Rambouillet, whose hôtel was, a century later, such a rendezvous for the gentler spirits of France in that hurly-burly period which followed the religious wars. Endowed as she was by nature, it was by most fortuitous circumstance that she was called to preside over the court of

Urbino, for at that time there was no other woman in Italy who was so fitted for such a distinguished position. It was in the last decade of the *quattrocento* that Elizabetta was married, and she found clustered about her from the very start illustrious artists and men of letters. Melozzo da Forli and Giovanni Santi—Raphael's father—were there, and there the early youth of Raphael was spent; Jan van Eyck and Justus of Ghent, the great Flemish painters, were also there, and the palace was adorned with many monuments to their skill. Here it was that Piero della Francesca had written his celebrated work on the science of perspective, Francesco di Giorgio his *Trattato d'Architettura,* and Giovanni Santi his poetical account of the artists of his time; and here it was in the first days of the sixteenth century that Elizabetta was the centre of a group which was all sweetness and light when compared with the prevailing habits of life.

In this circle were to be found, among others, Bernardo Bibbiena, the patron of Berni, of whom Raphael has left us a portrait which is now in the Pitti Palace; Giuliano de' Medici, whose marble statue by Michael Angelo may still be seen in San Lorenzo at Florence; Cardinal Pietro Bembo, who had in his youth fallen a victim to the charms of Lucrezia Borgia when she first went to Ferrara; Emilia Pia, the wife of Antonio da Montefeltro, who is described as "a lady of so lively wit and judgment, that she seems to govern the whole company"; and last, but far from least, Baldassare Castiglione, that model courtier and fine wit, who has left a picture of Urbino in his celebrated book *Il Cortegiano,* which was long known in Italy as *Il Libro d'Oro.* This volume is an elaborate discussion of the question, What constitutes a perfect courtier; and it was for a long time a most comprehensive and final compendium, handbook, and guide for all who wished to perfect

themselves in courtly grace. What interests us most in the book, however, is the fact that Castiglione has put this discussion of polite manners into the form of a conversation which he supposes to have taken place in the drawing room of the Countess of Urbino, that being the most likely spot in all Europe for such a discussion at such a time, for Guidobaldo's court was "confessedly the purest and most elevated in all Italy." Castiglione was one of Elizabetta's most ardent admirers, and he says of her that no one "approached but was immediately affected with secret pleasure, and it seemed as if her presence had some powerful majesty, for surely never were stricter ties of love and cordial friendship between brothers than with us."

Count Guidobaldo early became a cripple and an invalid, too ardent devotion to books and to athletic pursuits at the same time having undermined a constitution that was never strong; therefore, it was his custom to retire for the night at an early hour; but it was in the evening that the countess held court, and then were gathered together, for many years, all the brightest minds of Italy, who felt the charm of her presence and the value of her stimulating personality. Urbino was a school of good manners, as Naples had been in the days of Queen Joanna; it was the first great literary salon in modern history, and, presided over by a woman who was a veritable *grande dame de société*, its influence was by no means confined to a narrow sphere. Even in far-away England, Urbino was known and appreciated; and Henry VII., to show his esteem for its ruler, conferred the Order of the Garter upon Guidobaldo. In acknowledgment of this favor, Castiglione was sent to the English court to bear the thanks of his lord, and with him he took as a present Raphael's *Saint George and the Dragon*, which, by the way, was taken from England when Cromwell ordered the sale of

the art treasures of Charles I., and may now be seen at the Louvre. The old Count Federigo had made all this refined magnificence possible, it is true, and Guidobaldo had been in every way a worthy successor to his father, though lacking his rugged strength; but to Guidobaldo's wife, the gracious and wise Elizabetta Gonzaga, belongs the credit for having kept Urbino up to a high standard—an achievement of which few, if any, other women of her time were capable. There was needed a person who combined worldly knowledge with education and a sane, decent philosophy of life, and Guidobaldo's wife was that person.

Veronica Gambara deserves a place among the good and illustrious women of this time; and though she occupied a position far less conspicuous than that of the Countess of Urbino, she was still a person of reputation and importance. Born in the year 1485, her "fortunate parents," as Zamboni calls them, gave her a most careful and thorough education, and as a young woman she was noted for her poetic gifts, which were of a high order. At the age of twenty-five she married Ghiberto, Count of Correggio, and their union was one of true sympathy and deep attachment, such as was rarely seen then, when the *mariage de convenance* was more in vogue, perhaps, than it is in these later days in Paris. Nine happy years they spent together, and two sons were born to them; then Ghiberto died, leaving Veronica in such grief that she fell ill and hovered a long time between life and death. In one of her poems she relates that it was the fear that she might not meet her beloved husband in Paradise which prevented her from dying with him. She had work to do, however, as her husband, in sign of his great confidence in her, had made her his sole executrix and given into her care the government of Correggio. Veronica had always possessed a lively imagination, and now in her grief her

sorrow was shown to the world in a most extravagant way. She wore the heaviest and blackest mourning obtainable; her apartments, furnished henceforth with the bare necessities of life, were tapestried in black; and black was the hue of her livery, her carriages, and her horses. To further proclaim to all the world her love for the departed, she had painted over the door of her chamber the couplet which Virgil has ascribed to Dido:

> "Ille meos, primus qui me sibi junxit, amores
> Abstulit: ille habeat secum servetque sepulchro!"

[He who first linked me to himself hath borne away my affection: may he possess it still and retain it in his grave!]

As to her personal appearance, Veronica was not beautiful in face, as her features were irregular; but it was said of her in her early womanhood that if her face had equalled her form she would have been one of the most beautiful women of her time. She was high-strung, enthusiastic, and passionate, but she possessed a character and an intelligence which enabled her to hold herself in check; she was a most devoted wife and entirely domestic in her disposition. Her poetry is addressed chiefly to her husband, and she never tires of extolling his many virtues. His eyes, in particular, seem to have been especially beautiful in her sight, as she devotes no less than six sonnets and a madrigal to a description of their charms, calling them *occhi stellante,* and telling of their power in most fervid terms. We cannot, however, consider her as a woman who was wholly concerned with her own small affairs, as her letters show her to have been in communication with the most illustrious literary men and women of all Italy, including Ariosto, Bembo, Sannazzaro, and Vittoria Colonna. Though her literary baggage was not extensive, the few sonnets she has left have a strength, simplicity, and

sincerity which were rare among the poets of her time. Her best poem was one addressed to the rival sovereigns, the Emperor Charles V., and the brilliant Francis I. of France; in it she pleads with them to give peace to Italy and join their forces, so as to drive back from the shores of Europe the host of the infidels. Her death occurred in the year 1550, and then, Mrs. Jameson tells us in somewhat ambiguous phrase, "she was buried by her husband." A little reflection will clear away the doubt, however, and make clear the fact that she was laid to rest beside the husband for whom she had buried herself in black for so many years.

No woman more completely devoted herself to her husband's memory, by means of her enduring verse, or deserves a higher place in the annals of conjugal poetry, than Vittoria Colonna; such laurel wreaths did she put upon the brow of her spouse, the Marquis of Pescara, that Ariosto was tempted to say, in substance, that if Alexander had envied Achilles the fame he had acquired in the songs of Homer, how much more would he have envied Pescara those strains wherein his gifted wife had exalted his fame above that of all contemporary heroes! Vittoria came from most illustrious families, as her father was the Grand Constable Fabrizio Colonna and her mother was Anna di Montefeltro, daughter of Federigo, the first great Duke of Urbino. At the early age of four, fate joined Vittoria in an infant marriage to the young Count d'Avalo, who was of her own age, and who later, as the Marquis of Pescara, really became her husband. When Vittoria was but a young girl, her beauty and her wonderful talents, added to her high station, made her conspicuous among her countrywomen, and her hand was often sought in marriage even by reigning princes. Both the Duke of Savoy and the Duke of Braganza desired to marry her, and the pope was even persuaded to plead their cause;

but all to no avail, as she had long considered her future settled and had no desire to change it. At the age of seventeen they celebrated their wedding, and their life together, which began with that moment, was never marred by a single discordant note.

The first four years of their married life were spent on the island of Ischia, where Pescara had a villa and a small estate, and there they lived in an idyllic happiness which has almost become proverbial. The young husband was not so studiously inclined as was his gifted wife, but he was a manly fellow, much given to athletic pursuits, and with a decided taste for a military career, and Vittoria was loved by him in a most tender and noble fashion. They were denied the happiness of children, and the young wife expresses her sorrow over this fact in her twenty-second sonnet; but she consoles herself by adding: "since it is not given to me to be the mother of sons who shall inherit their father's glory, at least may I be able, by uniting my name with his in verse, to become the mother of his great deeds and lofty fame." After their long honeymoon had come to an end, Pescara was moved to return to the world, or rather to enter it for the first time as a man, and he entered the imperial army. At the age of twenty-one, as a general of cavalry, he took part in the battle of Ravenna, where he was made a prisoner of war. After a year's detention, however, he was allowed to return to his post, and then followed campaigning in various parts of the peninsula. Vittoria, during all these days of absence, had remained quietly in their island home at Ischia, where she devoted her time to the composition of those sonnets in honor of her husband's glorious deeds which have since brought her such lasting reputation. In token of her fidelity and her general attitude toward the world and society at this time, Vittoria had

adopted as her device a small Cupid within the circlet of a twisted snake, and under it was the significant motto: *Quem peperit virtus prudentia servet amorem* [Discretion shall guard the love which virtue inspired]. The soldier-husband came for a hasty visit to Ischia whenever distances and the varying fortunes of war made it possible; but his stays were brief, and he always wore in his wife's eyes that romantic halo which it was but natural that a poetic woman should throw about the head of a young and brilliant general whose handsome features and noble carriage made him none the less attractive, and who happened at the same time to be her husband.

After a somewhat short but notable career as a soldier, Pescara was given entire command of the imperial armies, and he it was who directed the fortunes of the day during that memorable battle of Pavia when King Francis I. of France was captured, and when the illustrious French knight "without fear and without reproach," the Chevalier Bayard, made that remark which has long since become historic, *Tout est perdu fors l'honneur.* That battle won, and with such credit to himself, Pescara was loaded with praise and rewards, and, as is often the case under such circumstances, he was subjected to some temptations. His power had become so great, and his military skill was considered so remarkable, that efforts were made to entice him from the imperial service; he was actually offered the crown of the kingdom of Naples in case he would be willing to renounce his allegiance to Charles V. The offer tempted him, and he hesitated for a moment, writing to his wife to ascertain her opinion on the subject. It is clear that he wavered in his duty, but his excuse to Vittoria was that he longed to see her on a throne which she could grace indeed. She, however, without a moment's hesitation, wrote to him to remain faithful to his sovereign,

saying, in a letter cited by Giambattista Rota: "I do not desire to be the wife of a king, but rather of that great captain who, by means of his valor in war and his nobility of soul in time of peace, has been able to conquer the greatest monarchs." Pescara, obedient to his wife's desire, immediately began to free himself from the temptations which had been besetting his path, but he had gone so far upon this dangerous road that he was able to turn aside from it only after his hitherto untarnished honor had been sullied. The criticism which he received at this time made him melancholy, and, weakened by wounds received at the battle of Pavia, which now broke out again, he soon came to his end at Milan, at the age of thirty-five. Though she was for a long time stunned by her grief, Vittoria finally accepted her sorrow with some degree of calmness.

Back she then went to Ischia, where they had passed those earlier days together, and there, for seven years almost without interruption, she spent her time thinking of the dead lord of Pescara, and extolling him in her verse. Still young and beautiful, it was but natural that her grief might be controlled in time and that she might again find happiness in married life. Distinguished princes pleaded with her in vain, and even her brothers urged her to this course, which, under the circumstances, they considered entirely within the bounds of propriety; but to them all she gave the calm assurance that her noble husband, though dead to others, was still alive for her and constantly in her thoughts. After the first period of her grief had passed, she found herself much drawn toward spiritual and religious thoughts, and then it was that her poetry became devotional in tone and sacred subjects were now her only inspiration. Roscoe mentions the fact that she was at this time suspected of sympathizing in secret with the reformed doctrines in religion which were then

making such headway in the North and playing such havoc with the papal interests, but there seems little ground for this suspicion beyond the fact that her devotion to the things of the spirit and her somewhat austere ideas in regard to manners and morals were in that day so unusual as to call forth comment. This sacred verse was published in a volume entitled *Rime spirituali,* and Guingené is authority for the statement that no other author before Vittoria Colonna had ever published a volume of poetry devoted exclusively to religious themes.

Her most faithful friend and admirer in all her long widowhood of twenty-two years was the great artist, sculptor, and painter, Michael Angelo, who never failed to treat her with the tenderest courtesy and respect. No other woman had ever touched his heart, and she gave him suggestion and inspiration for much of his work. After those first seven years of loneliness at Ischia, Vittoria spent much time in the convents of Orvieto and Viterbo, and later she lived in the greatest seclusion at Rome; there it was that death overtook her. Wherever she went, Michael Angelo's thoughtfulness followed her out, and in those last moments at Rome he was with her, faithful to the end. He was the kindly, rugged master-genius of his time, an intellectual giant, and she was a woman of rare devotion and purity of soul; and the real Platonic affection which seems to have possessed them, in that age of license and scepticism, is touching and impressive. What this friendship meant to him, the poet has expressed in the following sonnet addressed to Vittoria, which is here given in Wordsworth's matchless translation:

> "Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace,
> And I be undeluded, unbetrayed;
> For if of our affections none find grace
> In sight of Heaven, then, wherefore had God made

The world which we inhabit? Better plea
Love cannot have than that in loving thee
Glory to that eternal peace is paid,
Who such divinity to thee imparts
As hallows and makes pure all gentle hearts.
His hope is treacherous only whose love dies
With beauty, which is varying every hour:
But in chaste hearts, uninfluenced by the power
Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower,
That breathes on earth the air of Paradise."

The ducal court at Ferrara became, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, the centre of much intellectual life and brilliancy; generous patronage was extended to the arts and to literature, and here gathered together a company which rivalled in splendor the court of Urbino in the days of the Countess Elizabetta. The duke, Alfonso II., son of that unfortunate Renée, daughter of Louis XII. of France, who had been kept in an Italian prison for twelve long years because of her suspected sympathy with the reformed doctrines, came of a long line of princes who had in the past given liberally to the cause of learning. During his reign, which covers the period from 1559 to 1597, the social side of court life in his dukedom came into special prominence. The two sisters of Alfonso—Lucrezia and Leonora—presided over this court, and to it came, from time to time, many of the most beautiful women of Italy. Tarquinia Moeza was there, a woman of beauty and of rare poetic gifts; Lucrezia Bendidio, beautiful and accomplished, and having constantly about her a most admiring throng of poets and literati; and later came the two acknowledged beauties of the day, Leonora di Sanvitali, Countess of Scandiano, and her no less charming mother-in-law, Barbara, Countess of Sala. Among the men of this company, suffice it to mention the name of the poet Guarini, whose fame has become enduring on account of his charming and idyllic drama, *Il pastor fido,* for he it is who seems to

embody that sprightliness of wit which gave to Ferrara at that time its gladsome reputation.

To this court there came, for the first time, in the year 1565, young Torquato Tasso, poet and courtier, scholar and gentleman, and already the author of a published narrative poem, the *Rinaldo,* which caused him to be hailed as the most promising poet of his generation when he was but in his eighteenth year. Bernardo Tasso, the poet's father, was likewise a poet and a professional courtier of some distinction, and varying fortunes had taken him to Urbino, where the son Torquato grew up, surrounded by all the evidences of refinement and culture. He had been favored by nature with a tall and commanding figure, and his good looks had already caused more than one gentle heart to flutter, when, at the age of twenty-one, with his father's consent and approval, he entered the service of the Cardinal Luigi d'Este, and became at once a conspicuous figure in court circles. Almost instantly the youth, filled as he was with most romantic ideas and readily susceptible to the power of woman's beauty, fell a captive to the charms of the Princess Leonora d'Este, who, though some ten years his senior, seemed to embody all the graces and to completely satisfy the ideal which up to this time he had been able to see only with his mind's eye. Leonora had already been sought in marriage by many titled suitors, but she had invariably turned a deaf ear to such proposals, never finding one who could please her fancy or who promised comfort in her loneliness. For she was lonely in that court, as she seems to have dwelt in a sort of spiritual isolation most of the time; there was always a melancholy air about her, which had no doubt been induced in large measure by her mother's sad fate. For Tasso to love her was most natural; but they both knew that such a love could be but hopeless, and it cannot be

said that she encouraged him in any covert manner or that he made open profession of his passion. It is true that he makes her the subject of many of his poems, wherein he lauds her to the skies, but this is no more than was expected of a court poet; he did the same for other ladies, but in all that was dedicated to her charms there seems to shine forth a truer light of real affection than is found in all the others. What words of affection, if any, passed between them can never be known; but it seems that there must have been some sort of tacit consent to his silent adoration, and Tasso tells in a madrigal, perhaps in proof of this, that once, when he had asked her pardon for having put his arm upon her own in the eagerness of conversation, she replied, with gentleness: "You offended, not by putting your arm there, but by taking it away!"

For twelve years Tasso remained at Ferrara, constantly writing sonnets and short poems of all descriptions, which were most often addressed to Leonora, but at the same time he was busily working upon that longer poem in epic form, descriptive of the First Crusade, the *Gerusalemme liberata,* wherein he puts a new feeling into Italian poetry, which had been expressed before by Ariosto in his amatory verse, but which cannot be found to any great extent in his more pretentious work, the *Orlando Furioso.* This new feeling was real sentiment, and not sentimentality, and it denotes the growing conception of the worth and dignity of womanhood which we have already discovered in the poetry of Michael Angelo. Allowing for the infinite contradictions possible in human nature, it may be that these men of the same time, who so coolly killed their wives and sisters for acts of infidelity, were touched in some dim way with the same feeling, to which, alas! they gave but sorry expression, if the surmise be true.

The constant excitement of the court and his unending literary labors commenced to tell upon the poet in 1575, when his health began to fail and he grew irritable and restless, became subject to delusions, fancied that he had been denounced by the Inquisition, and was in daily terror of being poisoned. Then it was said that the poet was mad, and there are some who have whispered that it was his unrequited love for the Princess Leonora which brought about this calamity. However that may be, the climax was reached in the year 1577, when Tasso, in the presence of Lucrezia d'Este,—who was then Duchess of Urbino,—drew a knife upon one of his servants. For this he was arrested, but soon after was given his liberty on condition that he should go to a Franciscan monastery and give himself that rest and attention which his failing health demanded. Here, however, he was beset with the idea that the duke sought to take his life, and he fled in disguise to his sister, who was then living at Sorrento. Various explanations have been given for this sudden flight, and some biographers have insinuated that the duke had discovered some hidden intrigue between his sister Leonora and Tasso which had caused the latter to fear for his safety. This supposition cannot be accepted as true, however, for if the duke had known or had even strongly suspected such a thing he would have promptly put the poet to death without compunction, and such a course of action would have been entirely justified by the public sentiment of the time. And if the supposition were true, is it probable that Tasso would have been allowed to return to Ferrara in a short time, as he did? Now begins a confused life, and the poet comes and goes, moved by a strange restlessness, never happy away from Ferrara, yet never caring to stay there long. Finally, on one occasion he thought himself so neglected at his return that he made a most violent

scene, and became so bitter and incoherent in his complaints that he was pronounced insane and imprisoned by order of the duke. There he remained for seven years, and the most of that time he was in a well-lighted and well-furnished room, where he was allowed to receive visitors and devote himself to literary work whenever he so desired. At the end of this time, in which Tasso himself speaks of his mental disorder, he went to Mantua, where he had been invited by the Prince Vincenzo Gonzaga; there he spent a few pleasant months; but he soon grew discontented, the roaming fit came upon him again, and after a number of years of pitiful endeavor he finally died, in 1595, at the convent of Saint Onofrio.

It does not seem just to blame the Princess Leonora d'Este for the sad fate which befell Tasso, as so many have done, for there is no proof of any unkindness on her part. That he loved her there can be but little doubt, but hardly to the verge of madness, as he wrote love sonnets to other ladies at the same time; the truth seems to be that he became mentally unbalanced as the result of the precocious development of his powers, which made a man of him while yet a boy and developed in him an intensity of feeling which made his candle of life burn fiercely, but for a short time only. His end was but the natural consequence of the beginning, and whether Leonora helped or hindered in the final result, it matters not, for she was blameless. She died in the second year of Tasso's imprisonment, sad at heart as she had ever been, never deeply touched by the poet's constant praises, and to the end a victim to that melancholy mood which had come upon her in childhood.

Chapter X

The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

X

THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

THE transition from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century in Italy was marked by no sudden changes of any kind. The whole country was thoroughly prostrate and under the control of the empire; a national spirit did not exist, and the people seemed content to slumber on without opposing in any way the tyranny of their foreign masters. The glory of the Italian Renaissance had been sung in all the countries of Europe; in every nook and corner of the continent, Italian painters and sculptors, princes and poets, artists and artisans of all kinds, had stimulated this new birth of the world; but this mission accomplished, Italy seemed to find little more to do, and for lack of an ideal her sons and daughters wasted their time in the pursuit of idle things. It was the natural reaction after an age of unusual force and brilliancy. In the shadow of the great achievements of the sixteenth century in all lines of human activity, the seventeenth, lost in admiration, could imagine no surer way to equal attainment than to imitate what had gone before. Literature became stilted and full of mannerisms and underwent a process of refinement which left it without strength or vigor, and society in general seemed more concerned with form and ceremony than with the deeper things of the spirit.

Countless examples are on record to show the petty jealousies which were agitating the public mind at this time, and the number of quarrels and arguments which had their origin in most trivial causes passes belief. Rank and position were of the utmost consequence, and questions of precedence in public functions were far more eagerly discussed than were questions of national policy. Naples, under the control of Spanish princes, was particularly noted for such exhibitions of undignified behavior. On one occasion, during a solemn church ceremony, the military governor of the city left the cathedral in a great rage because he had noticed that a small footstool had been placed for the archbishop, while nothing of the kind had been provided for his own comfort. At the death of a certain princess, the royal commissioners delayed the funeral because it was claimed that she had used arms and insignia of nobility above her true rank, and was not entitled, therefore, to the brilliant obsequies which were being planned by the members of her family. The body was finally put in a vault and left unburied until the matter had been passed upon by the heraldry experts in Madrid! During the funeral services which were being held in honor of the Queen of Spain, the archbishop desired footstools placed for all the bishops present, but the vicegerent opposed this innovation, and the ceremony was finally suspended because they could come to no agreement. The cities of Cremona and Pavia were in litigation for eighty-two years over the question as to which should have precedence over the other in public functions where representatives of the two places happened to be together; finally, the Milanese Senate, to which the question was submitted, "after careful examination and mature deliberation, decided that it had nothing to decide." Another example of this small-mindedness is shown in the case of

the General Giovanni Serbelloni, who, while fighting in the Valteline in 1625, was unwilling to open a despatch which had been sent to him, because he had not been addressed by all his titles. It is a pleasure to add that as a result of this action he was left in ignorance as to the approach of the enemy and the next day suffered a severe defeat.

Rome was the seat of much splendor and display—an inevitable state of affairs when the fact is taken into consideration that the city was filled with legates and embassies, all anxious to wait upon his holiness the pope and gain some special privilege or concession. At this time the cardinals, too, were not mere ecclesiastics, but rather men of great wealth and power; often they became prime ministers in their several countries,—as Richelieu, for example,—and the great and influential houses of Savoy, Este, Gonzaga, Farnese, Barberini, and many others, always possessed one or more of them who vied in magnificence with the pope himself. And all this helped to make the Eternal City the scene of much brilliancy. The papal court was the natural centre of all this animation, and many a stately procession wended its way to the Vatican. On one occasion, the Duke of Parma, wishing to compliment a newly elected pope, sent as his representative the Count of San Secondo, who went to his solemn interview followed by a long procession of one hundred and fifty carriages, and appeared before the pontiff with eighteen distinguished prelates in his train. This mad passion for display led to so many evils of all kinds that Urban VIII. prohibited "indecent garments" for both men and women. In the interests of public morality, it was further decreed that women were not to take music lessons from men, and nuns were allowed no other professors than their own companions. Public singing, distinct from religious ceremonies, was a novelty at

this time, and women with the gift of song were paid most liberally for their services. Venice was the city most noted for its festivals and carnivals, and here these women were given most generous treatment.

In Florence, as in all the rest of Italy, Spain was taken as "the glass of fashion, the mould of form" for the first part of the century, but the splendor of the court of Louis Quatorze soon caused French fashions to reign supreme. Then, as now, brides were accustomed to dress in white, while married women were given a wide latitude in their choice of colors. At first, widows wore a dress distinctive not only in color but in cut, yet eventually they were to be distinguished by only a small headdress of black crape. Young women were much given to curling their hair, and at the same time it was the fashion to wear upon the forehead a cluster of blond curls, a *petite perruque,* which, in the words of an old chronicler, Rinuccini, "is very unbecoming to those whose hair happens to be of another color." From the same authority is derived the following information concerning the women belonging to the under crust of society: "Prostitutes, formerly, all wore an apparent sign which revealed their infamous profession; it was a yellow ribbon fastened to the strings of the hats, which were then in fashion; when hats went out of style, the yellow ribbon was worn in the hair, and if the women were ever found without it they were severely punished. Finally, on payment of a certain tax, they were allowed to go without the ribbon, and then they were to be distinguished by their impudence only." In Florence, women of this class were especially noted for their beauty, and there it was customary to compel them all to live within a certain district.

In the average Florentine household it had been the custom to have three women servants,—a cook, a second

girl, and a *matrona*. This third servant was better educated than the others, and it was her duty, outside of the house, to keep her mistress company, whether she rode in her carriage or went about on foot. At home, she did the sewing and the mending, and generally dressed her mistress and combed her hair. For this work the *matrona* received a salary of six or seven dollars a month, and it seems to have been usual for her employers to arrange a good marriage for her after several years of service, giving her at that time from one hundred to one hundred and fifty crowns as a dowry. Later in the century, the *matrona* does not seem to have been so common, and many women went alone in their carriages, while on foot they were accompanied by a manservant in livery. The wealthier ladies of the nobility, however, were accompanied in their conveyances by a *donzella,* and on the street and in all public places by an elderly and dignified manservant, dressed in black, who was known as the *cavaliere*. The fashion with regard to this male protector became so widespread that the women of the middle class were in the habit of hiring the services of some such individual for their occasional use on fête days and whenever they went to mass. The further development of this custom and its effect upon public morals in the following century will be discussed on another page.

Busy with all-absorbing questions of dress, etiquette, and domestic management, it does not appear that the women of the seventeenth century in Italy took any great share in public events, although one Italian woman at least, leaving the country of her birth, was placed by fate upon a royal throne. Henry IV. of France, about the year 1600, was hard pressed for the payment of certain debts by Ferdinand I., Grand Duke of Tuscany, as the Medici were still the bankers of Europe, and the French

king was owing more than a million louis d'or; but the whole matter was settled in a satisfactory way when Henry gave definite promises to pay within a dozen years. To maintain his credit in the meantime, and to facilitate the payment of the money, the one-time King of Navarre demanded in marriage Marie de' Medici, the niece of the grand duke; it is needless to say that the request was speedily granted, for the pride and ambition of this rich Tuscan family were unlimited, and the memory of that other daughter of the house of Medici, Catherine, who had been Queen of France and mother of three French kings, was still fresh in the minds of all. The wedding ceremony was performed in great splendor, at Florence, Henry sending a proxy to represent him at that time; and then the young bride set out for France, followed by a glittering retinue, and bearing, as her dowry, six hundred thousand crowns of gold. Arriving at Leghorn, they took ship for Marseilles, and then began a triumphal march across the country, cities vying with each other in doing her honor. Cantu tells us that at Avignon, which was still a city under the temporal sway of the pope, Marie was placed in a chariot drawn by two elephants, and given an escort of two thousand cavaliers. There were seven triumphal arches and seven theatres; for it was the proud boast of the residents of Avignon that everything went by sevens in their city, as there were seven palaces, seven parishes, seven old convents, seven monasteries, seven hospitals, seven colleges, and seven gates in the city wall! Several addresses of welcome were delivered in the presence of the young queen, though in this instance the number was hardly seven, poems were read, and she received a number of gold medals bearing her profile upon one side and the city's coat of arms upon the other. Henry had left Paris to come to meet his bride, and it was at

Lyons that the royal pair saw each other for the first time. It cannot be said that this first interview was warmly enthusiastic, for the king found her far less beautiful than the portrait which had been sent to him, and he soon came to the sad conclusion that she was too fat, had staring eyes and bad manners, and was very stubborn.

After the birth of a son and heir, who later became Louis XIII., the king neglected his wife to such an extent that she felt little sorrow at the time of his assassination. Then it was, as queen-regent, that Marie for the first time entered actively into political life; but her ability in this sphere of action was only moderate, and she was soon the centre of much quarrel and contention, wherein the unyielding feudal nobility and the Protestants figured largely as disturbing causes. In the midst of these troublous times, the queen had an invaluable assistant in the person of Eleanora Galigaï, her foster-sister, whose husband, Concino Concini, a Florentine, had come to France in the suite of Marie, and had subsequently risen to a position of influence in the court. Eventually, he became the Maréchal d'Ancre, and his wife was spoken of as *la Maréchale* or *la Galigaï,* for so great was the extent of Eleanora's control over the queen that she was one of the most conspicuous women in all Europe at that time. Gradually, she was criticised on account of the way in which she used her power, and it was alleged that she was overmuch in the company of divers magicians and astrologers who had been brought from Italy, and that the black art alone was responsible for her success. These accusations finally aroused such public hostility that, after a trial which was a travesty upon justice, Eleanora was soon condemned to death, on the charge of having unduly influenced the queen by means of magic philters. Eleanora went to her death bravely, saying with dignity to her

accusers: "The philter which I have used is the influence which every strong mind possesses, naturally, over every weaker one."

Not long after this Florentine queen of France was playing her part in public affairs, all Europe was surprised by another woman, whose actions were without parallel and whose case seems to be the opposite of the one just cited. Marie de' Medici left Italy to become a queen, and now a queen is seen to abdicate that she may go to Rome to live. Christine, Queen of Sweden, a most enlightened woman and the daughter of the great Gustavus Adolphus who had brought about the triumph of the Protestant arms in Germany, relinquished her royal robes in the year 1654, announced her conversion to Catholicism, and finally went to Rome, where she ended her days. She was given a veritable ovation on her arrival there, as may well be imagined, for the Church rarely made so distinguished a convert, and Christine, in acknowledgment of this attention, presented her crown and sceptre as a votive offering to the church of the Santa Casa at Loretto. At Rome she lived in one of the most beautiful palaces in the city, and there divided her time between study and amusements. Through it all she was never able to forget the fact that she had been a queen, and many examples might be given of her haughty demeanor in the presence of those who were unwilling to do her bidding. Before leaving Sweden, Christine had tried to gather a circle of learned men about her at Stockholm, and the great French philosopher Descartes spent some months in her palace. Later, when in Paris, on her way to Italy, a special session of the French Academy had been held in her honor, and all of the literary men of France went out to the palace at Fontainebleau while she was domiciled there, to do her honor. Once in Rome, it was her immediate desire to

become the centre of a literary coterie, and to that end she was most generous in her gifts to artists and men of letters. Her intelligence and her liberality soon gave her great influence, and before long she was able to organize an Academy in due form under her own roof. She was for many years a most conspicuous figure in Roman society, and at the time of her death, in 1689, Filicaïa, a poet of some local reputation, declared that her kingdom comprised "all those who thought, all those who acted, and all those who were endowed with intelligence."

In this seventeenth century, as in the one before, parents were continually compelling their children and especially their daughters to enter upon a religious career, and many of them were forced to this course in spite of their protestations. Cantu tells of the case of Archangela Tarabotti, who was compelled to enter the convent of Saint Anne at Venice, though all her interests and all her ways were worldly in the extreme. To the convent she went, however, at the age of thirteen, because she was proving a difficult child to control, and there she was left to grind her teeth in impotent rage. In common with many other young girls of her time, she had never been taught to read or write, as the benefit of such accomplishments was not appreciated in any general way—at least so far as women were concerned; but, once within the convent walls, from sheer ennui, Archangela began to study most assiduously, and finally published a number of books which present an interesting description and criticism of existing manners and customs in so far as they had to do with women and their attitude toward conventual institutions. Having entered upon this life under protest, her first books were written in a wild, passionate style, and it was her purpose to make public the violence of which she had been a victim, and to prove, by copious references to authorities

both sacred and profane, that women should be allowed entire liberty in their choice of a career. Incidentally, she cursed most thoroughly the fathers who compelled their daughters to take the veil in spite of their expressed unwillingness. Perhaps the most important of these protests, which was given an Elzevir edition in 1654, was entitled *Innocence Deceived, or The Tyranny of Parents.* This special edition was dedicated to God, and bore the epigraph: "Compulsory devotion is not agreeable to God!" Another of these books was entitled *The Hell of Convent Life,* and these titles are certainly enough to show that she set about her task of religious—or, rather, social—reform with a most fervid, though somewhat bitter, zeal. Naturally, these open criticisms caused a great scandal in ecclesiastical circles, and many vigorous attempts were made to reconcile the recalcitrant nun and induce her to modify her views. Finally, moved by the pious exhortations of the patriarch, Federigo Cornaro, she became somewhat resigned to her fate. Then it was said of her that "she abandoned the pomp of fine garments, which had possessed so great a charm for her," and the records show that the last years of her life were spent in an endeavor to atone for the extravagances of her youthful conduct. A number of devout books were produced by her during this time, and among them the following curious titles may be noticed: *The Paved Road to Heaven* and *The Purgatory of Unhappily Married Women.*

A somewhat similar case of petty tyranny, and one which was soon the talk of all Europe, is the pathetic story of Roberto Acciaïuoli and Elizabetta Marmoraï. These two young people loved each other in spite of the fact that Elizabetta was the wife of Giulio Berardi; when the latter died, everyone supposed that the lovers would marry, and such was their intention, but they found an unexpected

obstacle in their path, for Roberto's uncle, the Cardinal Acciaïuoli, had other views on the subject. It was his desire that his nephew should contract a marriage with some wealthy Roman family whose influence might aid him to become pope. The young man refused to further this project in any way, and insisted upon marrying the woman of his choice; the cardinal, in despair, had to fall back upon the assistance of his ruling prince, Cosmo II., Grand Duke of Tuscany. Cosmo, unwilling to offend this prelate who might some day become the head of the Church, took action in his behalf and ordered that Elizabetta should be confined in a Florentine convent. Thereupon Roberto fled to Mantua, and, after having married her by letter, publicly proclaimed his act and demanded that his wife be delivered up to him. The best lawyers in Lombardy now declared the marriage a valid one, but in Florence the steps taken were considered merely as the equivalent of a public betrothal. So the matter stood for a time, until the pope died and the ambitious cardinal presented himself as a candidate for the pontiff's chair. Then the outraged nephew sent to each one of the papal electors a detailed account of what had taken place, with the result that his uncle's candidacy was a complete failure. Cosmo, moved somewhat by public opinion, which was all upon the side of the lovers, ordered Elizabetta to be released from her captivity, whereupon she joined her husband in Venice, that she might share his exile. They were not allowed to remain there for a long time in peace, however, as Cosmo, smarting under the lash of popular disapproval, decided to make an effort to get them within his power again, that he might wreak his vengeance upon them. Accordingly, he demanded that the Venetian republic should deliver them up, charging that they had been guilty of gross disrespect toward him, their sovereign. Hearing

of this requisition, Roberto and Elizabetta, disguised as monks, fled to Germany, but were recognized at Trent and taken back to Tuscany. Acciaïuoli was then deprived of all his property and imprisoned for life in the fortress of Volterra, and his wife was threatened with the same treatment if she persisted in maintaining the validity of the marriage. Worn by all this trouble and persecution, Elizabetta weakened, failed to show the courage which might be expected from the heroine of such a dramatic story, and preferred to live alone for the rest of her days than to spend her life in prison with her devoted husband.

The eighteenth century found Italy still under the control of foreign rulers, and the national spirit was still unborn; public morals seem to have degenerated rather than improved, and then, as always, the women were no better than the men desired them to be. Details of the life of this period are extremely difficult to obtain, as the social aspects of Italian life from the decline of the Renaissance to the Napoleonic era have been quite generally neglected by historians; the information which is obtainable must be derived in large measure from books and letters on Italian travel, written for the most part by foreigners. One of the most interesting volumes of this kind was written by a Mrs. Piozzi, the English wife of an Italian, who had unusual opportunities for a close observation of social conditions; several of the following paragraphs are based upon her experiences.

The most striking thing in the social life of this time is the domestic arrangement whereby every married woman was supposed to have at her beck and call, in addition to her husband, another cavalier, who was known as a *cicisbeo* and was the natural successor of the Florentine *cavaliere* before mentioned. Cicisbeism has been much criticised and much discussed as to its bearing upon public

morals, and many opposite opinions have been expressed with regard to it. The Countess Martinengo Cesaresco, who is a most careful and able student of Italian life, has the following to say upon the subject: "He [the *cicisbeo*] was frequently a humble relative—in every family were cadets too poor to marry, as they could not work for their living, or too sincere to become priests, to whom cavalier service secured a dinner, at any rate, if they wanted one. It was the custom to go to the theatre every evening—the box at the opera was an integral part of the household arrangements, a continuation of the salon—only it could not be reached without an escort. The chaperon did not exist, because a woman, no matter how old, was no escort for another woman, nor could she herself dispense with an attendant of the other sex. A dowager of sixty and a bride of sixteen had equally to stay at home if there was not a man to accompany them. The cavalier's service was particularly in request at the theatre, but he was more or less on duty whenever his lady left her house for any purpose, with the doubtful exception of going to church. No husband outside a honeymoon could be expected to perform all these functions: he, therefore, appointed or agreed upon the appointment of somebody else to act as his substitute. This was, in nine cases out of ten, the eminently unromantic cavalier servitude of fact. The high-flown, complimentary language, the profound bowing and hand-kissing of the period, combined to mystify strangers as to its real significance. Sometimes, when there was really a lover in the question, the *cavalier servente* must have been a serious impediment; he was always *Là planté . . . à contrecarrer un pauvre tiers,* in the words of the witty Président de Brosses, who, though he did not wholly credit the assurances he received as to the invariable innocence of the institution, was yet far from

passing on it the sweeping judgment arrived at by most foreigners. There is no doubt that habit and opportunity did, now and then, prove too strong for the two individuals thrown so constantly together. 'Juxtaposition is great,' as Clough says in his *Amours de Voyage;* but that such lapses represented the rule rather than the exception is not borne out either by reason or record."

Mrs. Piozzi is somewhat dubious in regard to this condition of affairs and is hardly disposed to take the charitable view which has just been given, but the general trend of more enlightened comment seems to agree with the Countess Cesaresco. In Sheridan's *School for Scandal* occur the following lines, which convey the same idea:

LADY TEAZLE.—"You know I admit you as a lover no farther than fashion sanctions."

JOSEPH SURFACE.—"True—a mere platonic *cicisbeo*—what every wife is entitled to."

Fragments taken somewhat at random regarding the women of several of the more important cities of Italy may serve to give some idea regarding their general position and condition throughout the country at large. Writing from Milan, Mrs. Piozzi says: "There is a degree of effrontery among the women that amazes me, and of which I had no idea till a friend showed me, one evening, from my own box at the opera, fifty or a hundred low shopkeepers' wives dispersed about the pit at the theatre, dressed in men's clothes (*per disempegno,* as they call it), that they might be more at liberty, forsooth, to clap and hiss and quarrel and jostle! I felt shocked." Venice was, as it had ever been, a city of pleasure. The women, generally married at fifteen, were old at thirty, and such was the intensity of life in this "water-logged town"—as F. Hopkinson Smith somewhat irreverently called it upon

one occasion—that a traveller was led to remark: *On ne goûte pas ses plaisirs, on les avale.* Here, as in all parts of Italy for that matter, the conditions of domestic life were somewhat unusual at this time, as it was the custom to employ menservants almost exclusively; as these servitors were under the control of the master of the house, it was quite common for the women to intrust to their husbands the entire management of household affairs. Thus freed from family cares, Venetian ladies had little to occupy their time outside of the pleasures of society. Nothing was expected of them on the intellectual side; they had no thought of education, found no resource in study, and were not compelled to read in order to keep up with society small-talk; so long as they found a means to charm their masculine admirers, nothing more was demanded. Apparently, for them to charm and fascinate was not difficult, for, according to Mrs. Piozzi, "a woman in Italy is sure of applause, so she takes little pains to secure it." Accordingly, the women of Venice seem to have been quite unpretentious in their manners and dress. They wore little or no rouge, though they were much addicted to the use of powder, and their dresses were very plain and presented little variety. "The hair was dressed in a simple way, flat on top, all of one length, hanging in long curls about the neck or sides, as it happens." During the summer season it was the custom literally to turn night into daytime, as social functions were rarely begun before midnight, and it was dawn before the revellers were brought home in their gondolas. At one place in Venice were literary topics much discussed, and that was at Quirini's Casino, a semi-public resort where ladies were much in evidence, and this was but the exception which proved the rule.

Genoa has been thus described: "It possesses men without honesty, women without modesty, a sea without fish,

and a woods with no birds," and, without going into the merits of each of these statements, it is safe to say that the state of public morals in this city was about the same as that to be found in any other Italian city. Apropos of the poor heating arrangements in Genoese houses, Mrs. Piozzi makes the following remark, which gives a sidelight upon some of the customs of the place and will interest the curious: "To church, however, and to the theatre in winter, they have carried a great green velvet bag, adorned with gold tassels and lined with fur to keep their feet from freezing, as carpets are not in use. Poor women run about the streets with a little earthen pipkin hanging on their arm filled with fire, even if they are sent on an errand."

In Florence, the art of making improviso verses—which has ever been popular in southern countries—seems to have reached its highest state of perfection during this eighteenth century, and a woman, the celebrated Corilla, was acknowledged to be the most expert in this accomplishment. At Rome, when at the climax of her wonderful career, she was publicly crowned with the laurel in the presence of thousands of applauding spectators; and in her later years, at Florence, her drawing room was ever filled with curious and admiring crowds. Without pretensions to immaculate character, deep erudition, or high birth, which an Italian esteems above all earthly things, Corilla so made her way in the world that members of the nobility were wont to throng to her house, and many sovereigns, *en passage* at Florence, took pains to seek her society. Corilla's successor was the beautiful Fantastici, a young woman of pleasing personality and remarkable powers of improvisation, who soon became a popular favorite.

Both at home and abroad, Italian women were coming to the fore in musical circles, and no opera in any one of

the continental capitals was complete without its prima donna. Among the distinguished singers of this epoch the two most celebrated were Faustina Bordoni and Catarina Gabrielli. Faustina, born in the year 1700, was the daughter of a noble Venetian family, and at an early age began to study music under the direction of Gasparoni; when she was but sixteen, she made her début with such success that she was immediately given place as one of the greatest artists on the lyric stage. In Venice, Naples, Florence, and Vienna, she displayed such dramatic skill and such a wonderful voice that she was soon acknowledged as the most brilliant singer in Europe. Later, she was brought to London, under the management of the great composer Händel, and there she finally displaced in the public favor her old-time rival, Cuzzoni. The singer known as Catarina Gabrielli was the daughter of the cook of the celebrated Cardinal Gabrielli; in spite of her low origin, she was possessed of a great though insolent beauty, in addition to her wonderful vocal powers, and her brilliant career in Europe was most exceptional in every way. In Italy, later in Vienna, and even in far-away St. Petersburg, she not only achieved wonderful success as a singer, but by her coquettish ways she contrived to attract a crowd of most jealous and ardent admirers, who pursued her and more than once fought for her favors. During her stay in Vienna, the French ambassador, who had fallen a victim to her charms, became so madly jealous of the Portuguese minister, that he drew his sword on Catarina upon one occasion, and had it not been for her whalebone bodice she would have lost her life. As it was, she received a slight scratch, which calmed the enraged diplomat and brought him to his knees. She would pardon him only on condition that he would present her with his sword, on which were to be inscribed the

following words: "Sword of M. . . ., who dared strike La Gabrielli." Through the intervention of friends, however, this heavy penalty was never imposed, and the Frenchman was spared the ridicule which would have surely followed. Catarina, after a long and somewhat reckless career, passed her last years in Bologna, where she died, in 1796, at the age of sixty-six, after having won general esteem and admiration by her charities and by her steadiness of character, which was in notable contrast to the extravagance of her earlier life.

Perhaps the three most distinguished Italian women in all the century were Clelia Borromeo, Laura Bassi, and Gaetana Agnesi. The Countess Clelia was a veritable *grande dame,* who exerted a wide influence for good in all the north of Italy; Laura Bassi was a most learned and distinguished professor of philosophy at the University of Bologna; and the last member of this illustrious triad, Gaetana Agnesi, became so famous in the scholarly world that her achievements must be recounted with some attention to detail. At the time of her birth, in 1718, her father was professor of mathematics at Bologna, and it appears that she was so precocious that at the age of nine she had such command of the Latin language that she was able to publish a long and carefully prepared address written in that classic tongue, contending that there was no reason why women should not devote themselves to the pursuit of liberal studies. By the time she was thirteen she knew —in addition to Latin—Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish, German, and several other languages, and was so renowned for her linguistic attainments that she was called, familiarly, the "walking polyglot." When she was fifteen, her father began to invite the most learned men of Bologna to assemble at his house and listen to her essays and discussions upon the most difficult philosophical problems; in

spite of the fact that this display of her learning was known to be distasteful to the young girl, it was not until she reached her twentieth year that she was allowed to withdraw from society. In welcome seclusion, she devoted herself to the study of mathematics, and published several mathematical works whose value is still recognized. In 1752 her father fell ill, and, by Pope Benedict XIV., Gaetana was appointed to occupy his professorial chair, which she did with distinction. At her father's death, two years later, she withdrew from this active career; and after a most careful study of theology, she satisfied a long-cherished wish and entered a convent, joining the Order of Blue Nuns, at Milan. She was most actively interested in hospital work and charities of all kinds, and, as her death did not occur until 1799, lived a long life of usefulness.

Chapter XI

Italian Women in the Nineteenth Century

XI

ITALIAN WOMEN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

AFTER the torpor and stagnation of the last two centuries, after the self-abasement of the people, and the apparent extinction of all spirit of national pride, the French invasion and domination, under the stern rule of Bonaparte, was a rude awakening. Old boundaries were swept aside, old traditions were disregarded, old rulers were dethroned; everywhere were the French, with their Republican banners, mouthing the great words Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, ravaging and plundering in the most shameless fashion, and extorting the most exorbitant taxes. But the contagion spread—the Italians were impressed with the wonderful exploits of the one-time Corsican corporal, and they, in turn, began to wag their heads in serious discussion of the "rights of man," as the French had done a decade before. For the dissemination of the new ideas, political clubs were organized throughout Italy as they had existed in France, and the whole country was in ferment. Add to that the fact that Napoleon began to levy troops in Italy as soon as his position warranted this action, and that soon Italian soldiers were in all parts of Europe fighting under the French flag, and one can perhaps have some picture of the complete way in which French influences were made to prevail. In this conquered territory the population may be divided into three classes: first, the deposed nobility, who had for the most part left the

country; second, the middle class, composed of professional men and the wealthier citizens; and third, the common people. Of these three classes, the second was the one which Napoleon tried in every way to conciliate, for he counted upon its aid in the moulding of public opinion. He had little to do with the departed nobility, the common people were helping him fight his battles, but, if he hoped to occupy Italy permanently, his real appeal had to be made to the educated class. Accordingly, the arts of peace were used in the interests of the god of war; public improvements of all kinds were begun over all Italy, under the supervision of the French officials, canals were built, marshes were drained, academies of learning were founded, commerce was stimulated, schools for girls were started at Milan, Bologna, and Verona in imitation of those which had already been established in France, and, in fact, everything was done to prove to the people that the rule of the French was beneficial to the best interests of the peninsula. Many men of letters were won over by fair promises, and scientific men were, in many instances, so aided in their researches and so loaded with honors that it was difficult to resist the approaches of the emperor; and there resulted much fulsome praise in honor of Napoleon, who was hailed as a veritable god. Some there were, however, who resisted the advances of the conquerors and were loath to see the country so completely in the control of a foreign nation. It is true that Italy was enjoying a great prosperity in spite of the demands made upon it by the French, but this sudden accession of Republican ideas and the consciousness that Italian armies were fighting bravely all over the continent had aroused a national spirit which had lain dormant for centuries; the more far-seeing patriots were already looking forward to a time when Italy might be not only free but independent.

Among those unmoved by French promises were a number of brilliant women, who were outspoken in their hostility, and who gathered about them many of the most able men of the time. Though it is true that the French set the fashions, and in every city it was usual to find that the French officials were eagerly courted by the inhabitants, it is none the less true that in many of these cities there was some small but active centre of opposition, the salon of some gifted woman who was working might and main for the final triumph of the principle of Italian control in Italy. Napoleon had penetration enough to take such opposition at its just valuation. Women had already given him many a *mauvais quart d'heure* in Paris; Madame de Staël and, later, the beautiful Madame Récamier were forced to go into exile because he feared their power, and here in Italy he resolved not to be caught napping. Among the number of these Italian women who were daring enough to oppose his success, one of the most influential and best known was the Countess Cicognara. Her husband, Count Leopold Cicognara, was an archæologist of some reputation, who is to-day best known by his *Storia della Scultura;* he was precisely the type of man whose friendship and good will Napoleon was anxious to obtain. Cicognara kept his distance, however, and in his determination to hold himself aloof from all actual participation in the new order of things he was ably seconded by his wife, who was a most ardent partisan. In Milan her salon was known to be of the opposition, and there gathered all the malcontents, ready to criticise and blame, and wholly refusing their aid in any public matters undertaken under French auspices. Here, at Milan, Madame de Staël came to know the countess in the course of her wanderings through Italy, and, as may readily be imagined, the two women were much drawn to each other by reason of

their similar tastes, especially with regard to the political situation. Later, at Venice, the Countess Cicognara was again the centre of a group of free-thinkers, and there it was that she first felt the displeasure of Napoleon. The count had been summoned by him in the hope that he might finally be won over, but Cicognara conducted himself with such dignity that he excited no little admiration for his position of strict neutrality; his wife did not fare so well, inasmuch as she was harshly criticised for her active partisanship. Also, Napoleon caused it to be known that he would look with disfavor upon all who continued to frequent the salon of the countess; the result of this procedure was that of those who had formerly thronged her doors but two faithful ones remained—Hippolyte Pindemonte and Carlo Rosmini, both staunch patriots and men of ability.

After Waterloo and the fall of Napoleon, the French power in Italy was gone, and the Congress of Vienna, which arranged the terms of peace for the allied powers of Europe, restored the Italian states to their original condition, as they were before the Revolution. But the real conditions of Italian life were changed; for the people were now aroused in an unprecedented way, which made a return to the old mode of life impossible except in the outward form of things. The socialistic ideas of the French had gained some foothold in Italy; men and women were waking up to the possibilities which lay before them in the way of helping each other; and charitable and philanthropic works of every kind were undertaken with an interest which was altogether uncommon. As might be expected, women occupied an important place in these various activities and showed much enterprise and zeal in carrying out their plans. The Marchioness Maddalena Frescobaldi Capponi aided in founding at Florence a house of refuge for fallen

women; Maria Maddalena di Canossa, in the year 1819, established at Venice and at Verona the Order of the Daughters of Charity, whose task it was to perfect themselves in "love to God and love to man"; and various charitable schools were organized in other parts of the country. At Turin, Julie Colbert di Barolo, the friend of the famous Silvio Pellico, founded the Order of the Sisters of Saint Anne, whose members were to devote themselves to the education of poor girls, training them not only in the usual studies, but also in manners and deportment, and teaching them to be contented with their lot, whatever it might happen to be. The spirit of arts and crafts had ardent supporters at this time, and many endeavors were made to teach the people how to do something which might be of avail in their struggle for life. Among those interested in this movement was Rosa Govona, who had founded a society whose members were called, after her, Les Rosines, and who were bound to support themselves by means of their own work. The Napoleonic campaigns had taken from Italy many men who never returned; thus, there were many women who were left to their own resources, and it was for this class that Rosa Govona was working. The society grew rapidly, branch organizations were established in many cities, and there is no doubt that the movement was productive of much good. Another woman philanthropist of this time was the Countess Tarnielli Bellini, who left quite a large sum of money at Novara for the establishment of several charitable institutions, among them an industrial school.

Rome now became the real centre of Italian life; it was the objective point of every tourist, and it soon gathered together a somewhat heterogeneous population which was to pave the way for that cosmopolitan society which is to-day found in the Eternal City. While this

foreign element was growing more important every day, it cannot be said that the members of the old and proud Roman nobility looked upon it with any smile of welcome. Many of the newcomers were artists, sculptors and painters, who were attracted by the wealth of classic and Renaissance art which Rome contained, or they were expatriates for one of a number of reasons. One of the most distinguished women of this foreign colony was Madame Bonaparte, Napoleon's mother, who took up her residence in Rome after 1815, and lived there until 1836, the year of her death. She was a woman of fine presence and great courage, content with a simple mode of life which was quite in contrast with the princely tastes of her sons and daughters. Pauline Bonaparte, the emperor's favorite sister, had lived in Rome for a number of years, as she had married, in 1803, Camillo, Prince Borghese. She was soon separated from her husband, but continued to reside in Rome, bearing the title of Duchess of Guastalla; there she was housed in a fine palace, where she dwelt in a style of easy magnificence. Pauline was one of the most beautiful women of this time, and much of her charm and grace has been preserved in Canova's famous statue, the *Venus Victrix,* for which she served as model.

The most hospitable palace in all Rome during the first quarter of the century was that presided over by Signora Torlonia, Duchess of Bracciano. Her husband, "old Torlonia," as he was familiarly called, was a banker during the working hours of the day; but in the evening he became the Duke of Bracciano, and no one questioned his right to the title, as he was known to have paid good money for it. He had made princes of his sons and noble ladies of his daughters, and his great wealth had undoubtedly aided his plans. Madame Lenormant says of him: "he was avaricious as a Jew, and sumptuous as the most

magnificent grand seigneur," and he seems to have been a most interesting character. He lived in a beautiful palace upon the Corso, wherein was placed Canova's *Hercules and Lycas,* and there he and his wife dispensed a most open-handed hospitality. Madame Torlonia had been a beauty in her day, and she was a very handsome woman even in her later years. Kind and good-natured, she was like the majority of Italian women of her time—a curious combination of devotion and gallantry. It is related of her that she confided to a friend one day that she had taken great care to prevent her husband's peace of mind from being disturbed by her somewhat questionable conduct, and then added: "But he will be very much surprised when the Day of Judgment comes!" The Torlonia palace was practically the only princely house open to strangers, and it often sheltered a most distinguished company. Among those who were entertained there may be included Thorwaldsen, the great Danish sculptor, Madame Récamier, Chateaubriand, Canova, Horace Vernet, the French painter, and his charming daughter Louise, and the great musician Mendelssohn. The last, in a letter written from Rome in 1831, makes the following allusion to the Torlonias, which is not without interest: "Last night a theatre that Torlonia [the son] has undertaken and organized was opened with a new opera of Pacini's. The crowd was great and every box filled with handsome, well-dressed people; young Torlonia appeared in a stage box, with his mother, the old duchess, and they were immensely applauded. The audience called out: *Bravo, Torlonia, grazie, grazie!*"

Italy had continued its reputation as the home of music, and now, as in the eighteenth century, Italian singers, men and women, were wearing the laurel in all the capitals of Europe. Among the women who were thus celebrated

the best known were Grassini, Catalani, Pasta, and Alboni. Grassini was the daughter of a Lombardy farmer, and the expenses of her musical education had been defrayed by General Belgioso, who was much impressed with her wonderful voice and her charm of manner. Her début at La Scala was a wonderful success in spite of the fact that she then sang in company with the two greatest Italian singers of the time, Crescentini—one of the last of the male sopranos—and Marchesi. Later, she attracted the attention of Bonaparte, and soon accompanied him to Paris, anxious, it has been said, to play the rôle of Cleopatra to this modern Cæsar. Josephine's jealousy was aroused more than once by this song bird of Italy, but she continued in the emperor's good graces for a number of years, in spite of the fact that she was ever ready to follow the whim of the moment and distributed her favors quite promiscuously. In 1804 she was made directress of the Paris Opéra, and some years after, returning from a most wonderful London engagement, she sang in *Romeo and Juliet* with such effect that the usually impassive Napoleon sprang to his feet, shouting like a schoolboy; the next day, as a testimonial of his appreciation, he sent her a check for twenty thousand francs.

Angelica Catalani first created a stir in the world at the age of twelve, when, as a novice in the convent of Santa Lucia at Gubbio, in the duchy of Urbino, she sang for the daily service in the little chapel with such amazing sweetness that people came from all the neighborhood to listen to her. After some preliminary training, which was undertaken without the entire approval of the girl's father, Angelica was confided to the care of the great teacher Marchesi, who soon put her in the front rank of singers. Her success upon the stage was unquestioned, and her voice was one of the most remarkable in all the history of

music, being a pure soprano, with a compass of nearly three octaves,—from G to F,—and so clear and powerful that it rose fresh, penetrating, and triumphant above the music of any band or orchestra which might be playing her accompaniment. Bell-like in quality and ever true, this voice lacked feeling, and while it never failed to awaken unbounded enthusiasm, it rarely, if ever, brought a thrill of deeper emotion.

Giuditta Pasta, who became the lyric Siddons of her age, began her career as an artist laboring under many disadvantages, for she lacked a graceful personality and possessed a voice of but moderate power and sweetness. One thing she did possess in full measure, however, and that was an artistic temperament, which, combined with her unbounded ambition and her ability for hard work, soon brought her public recognition. Her simple but effective manner of singing and her wonderful histrionic ability made all her work dignified and impressive; her representation of the character of Medea, in Simon Mayer's opera by that name, has been called the "grandest lyric impersonation in the records of art." When the great actor Talma heard her in the days of her early success in Paris, he said: "Here is a woman of whom I can still learn. One turn of her beautiful head, one glance of her eye, one light motion of her hand, is, with her, sufficient to express a passion." The whole continent was at her feet—London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Vienna showered her with their *bravas* and their gifts, and her native Italy went wild at her approach. Her last great public performance was at Milan in 1832, when, in company with Donizetti the tenor and the then inexperienced Giulia Grisi, she sang the rôle of Norma, in Bellini's opera, which was then given for the first time under the bâton of the composer himself. Alboni, the wonderful contralto who owed her

early advancement and training to the kindly interest of Rossini, Fanny Persiani, the daughter of the hunchback tenor, Tacchinardi, who through her singing did more than any other artist to make the music of Donizetti popular throughout Europe—these and a number of other names might be mentioned to show that Italy was now the fountain head of song, as in the Renaissance it had been the home of the other fine arts.

This account of the triumphs of Italian women upon the continental stage would be wholly incomplete without some reference to the incomparable *danseuse* La Taglioni, who will always occupy an important place in the annals of Terpsichore. Without great personal charm, her success was due to her wonderful skill, which was the result of the mercilessly severe training that she had received from her father, Filippo Taglioni, who was a ballet master of some repute. Born at Stockholm, where her father was employed at the Royal Opera, she made her début at Vienna, where she created an immediate sensation. Hitherto ballet dancing had been somewhat realistic and voluptuous, as illustrated by the performances of the celebrated Madame Vestris, but La Taglioni put poetry and imagination into her work, which was more ideal in character, and her supremacy was soon unquestioned. Among her most remarkable performances was the dancing of the *Tyrolienne* in *Guillaume Tell,* and of the *pas de fascination* in *Robert le Diable*. In this mid-century period dancing occupied a far more important place in opera than it has since, but with the retirement of La Taglioni, in 1845, the era of grand ballets came practically to an end. About her work there seems to have been a subtle charm which no other modern *danseuse* has ever possessed, and her admirers were to be found in all ranks of society. Balzac often mentions her, and Thackeray says

in *The Newcomes* that the young men of the epoch "will never see anything so graceful as Taglioni in *La Sylphide*."

With the final accomplishment of Italian unity and the establishment of the court at Rome, there began a new life for the whole country, wherein the position of the ruling family was decidedly difficult. At the outset there was the opposition of the Vatican, for the pope was unwilling to accept the inevitable and relinquish his temporal power with good grace; and there was the greater problem, perhaps, of moulding into one nationality the various peoples of the peninsula. Neapolitans and Milanese, Venetians and Romans, were all so many different races, so far as their history and traditions were concerned, and the task of making them all Italians—which had been put upon the house of Savoy—was fraught with much danger. It is too early yet to know with what complete success this work will be crowned, but it may be safely said that Queen Margharita, wife of Humbert I., did much to bring about that general spirit of good will which has thus far been characteristic of united Italy. Owing to the peculiar conditions of the situation, and the strong local spirit which still endures everywhere, it was soon found that all Italy would be slow in coming to the court at Rome, and so the court decided to go to the country. Royal villas are scattered through the different provinces, and it is customary for the king and his suite to visit them with some frequency. During all this perambulating court life, Queen Margharita became a popular favorite, in no less degree than the king, and their democratic ways soon gained the love and esteem of the people in general. The following incident will show to what extent the queen was interested in the welfare of her subjects and what she was able to accomplish by means of her ready wit. Certain towns along the coast had become very prosperous

through the manufacture of coral ornaments of various kinds, and large numbers of women were given lucrative employment in this work until, slowly, coral began to go out of fashion, and then the industry commenced to diminish in importance. It became, in fact, practically extinct, and so great was the misery caused by the lack of work that the attention of the queen was called to this pitiful situation. Instantly, by personal gifts, she relieved the pressure of the moment, and then by deliberately wearing coral ornaments in a most conspicuous way she restored their popularity and at the same time brought back prosperity to the stricken villages. Since the death of King Humbert, Margharita has naturally lived somewhat more in retirement, but she has ever shown herself to be most eager to do everything for her people and especially for the women of Italy. Much progress in educational affairs has been brought about through her influence; and to show her interest in the movement for the physical training of women, which is slowly taking form, she has recently joined an Alpine club, and has done not a little mountain climbing in spite of the fact that she is no longer in the first bloom of youth.

The present queen, Helena of Montenegro, is beginning to enjoy the same popularity, and there is every reason to believe that her reign will continue, in a most worthy way, the traditions left by her predecessor. The conditions attending the marriage of the heir apparent when he was yet the Prince of Naples were such indeed as to win the sympathy and approval of the whole nation. Before this marriage, Crispi, the Italian premier, had tried to arrange for the young prince a match which might have some political significance, and to this end he collected the photographs of all the eligible princesses of Europe, put them together in a beautiful album, and told his young master to look

them over and select a wife for himself. The prince gazed at them with but languid interest, however, for these royal maidens were, most of them, strangers to him; he finally announced to the astonished minister that he did not intend to marry until he found a woman he loved! In this resolution he was not to be shaken, and the Princess Helena, whom he made his wife, he saw for the first time at the czar's coronation ceremonies at Moscow, and it was a simple case of love at first sight. Such simplicity and sincerity as are apparent in this real affection of the king and queen for each other cannot fail to have a widespread influence.

The modern Italian woman is not an easy person to describe, as it would be difficult to find one who might serve as a type for all the rest. In general, it may be said that they are not so well educated as the women in many other countries, and that so long as a woman is devout, and at the same time domestic in her tastes, she is considered to possess the most essential requisites of character and attainment. The women of the peasant class work in the fields with the men; in the towns and cities women help in their husbands' shops, as in France, and while they may not always possess the energy and business skill which characterize the French women, they are at least no more indolent and easy-going than their male companions. The women of the nobility are often less educated than their plebeian sisters, and for the most part lead a very narrow and petty existence, which produces little but vanity and selfishness and discontent. There are exceptions, however, and here and there may be seen a gentlewoman who has studied and travelled, and made herself not only a social but also an intellectual leader of distinction.

From a legal standpoint, the position of women differs in the various provinces, for, while the written law may be

the same throughout the kingdom, local customs are often widely divergent. Villari, in his recent book on Italian life, says that a woman's property is guaranteed to her by law from any abuse on her husband's part; she has equal rights of inheritance with her brothers, if her parents have made no will; and there are few cases in which her rights are inferior to those of her male relatives. Also, the woman is considered the natural and legal guardian of her children, after the death of her husband. In spite of this legal equality, the old idea of woman's inferior position still crops out, and it is noticeable that a father, in bequeathing his property, rarely leaves it to his daughters, but rather to his sons, and often to the eldest son alone, as in the old feudal days. Social conventions are not unlike those of other southern countries. For the majority of women marriage is the one aim in life, and an unmarried woman is shown little consideration and is the butt of much ridicule. In the northern part of Italy, women are gaining a certain amount of liberty in these latter days, and young girls of the better class may, without causing much comment, go upon the street unattended. In the south, however, the position of women is very different, and they are still regarded in much the same way as are the women of Oriental countries. The long years of Saracen rule are responsible for this condition, which makes the woman little more than the slave of her husband. It is said that in some country districts it is the custom for the husband to lock his wife in the house whenever he goes from home, and the usage is so well established that if the ceremony is omitted the woman is inclined to think that some slight is intended.

With regard to the education of women, the law makes no distinction between the sexes, and practically all schools, classical and technical, under government control, and the

universities, are open to both men and women. Special schools, both public and private, have been established exclusively for women, but they are not the rule. With regard to matters of attendance, statistics show that the proportion of women is larger in the universities than in the preparatory schools. As yet, the legal profession is not open to women practitioners, but many have pursued the study of medicine, and there are several who enjoy a large and lucrative practice. With all these advantages, the ordinary woman in Italy to-day rarely possesses what we would call an ordinary education, and there is absolutely no public opinion in favor of it. There are frequent bluestockings, it is true, but they have no influence with the public, and are showing themselves entirely ineffectual in forcing public opinion in this regard.

Though the great singers seem to come from Germany in these modern days, Italy has held a distinguished place upon the boards for the last half-century by reason of its great tragic actresses, Adelaide Ristori and Eleonora Duse. Ristori was beginning her career in the fifties when she went to Paris, where the great Rachel was in the very midst of her triumph; and there in the French capital, in the very face of bitter rivalry, she was able to prove her ability and make a name for herself. Later, in the United States she met with a most flattering reception, and for a season played with Edwin Booth in the Shakespearean répertoire. Duse first came into public notice about 1895, when her wonderful emotional power at once caused critics to compare her to Bernhardt, and not always to the advantage of the great French tragédienne. At one period her name became linked most unpleasantly with that of the young Italian realist Gabriele d'Annunzio.

In modern Italian literature two women stand out conspicuously—Matilda Serao and Ada Negri. The Signora

Serao, who began life as a journalist, is to-day the foremost woman writer of fiction in Italy, and her novels, which are almost without exception devoted to the delineation of Neapolitan life, are quite graphic and interesting, though her literary taste is not always good and she sometimes lapses into the commonplace and the vulgar. Also, she inclines somewhat toward the melodramatic, and, like many of her brothers in literature, she is far from free from what may best be termed "cheap sentiment." Ada Negri, who started in her career as a modest school teacher in Lombardy, is a lyric poet of no mean ability. She has taken up the cudgel for the poor and the weak and the oppressed, and so thorough and genuine are her appreciation and understanding of the life of the people, that she seems to have touched many hearts. Singing as she does of the hard lot of the poor, and of the many struggles of life, it is appropriate that the two volumes of her verses which have appeared up to this time should bear the titles *Fatalità* and *Tempeste*.

Many other women have acquired honored positions in literature, and woman's increased activity and prominence in all intellectual branches is a condition which may well excite wonder. While from many points of view unfortunately backward, the women of Italy are beginning to realize their more serious possibilities, and it is safe to say that the more advanced ideas regarding woman's work and her position in society, which come as the inevitable consequence of modern civilization and education, will soon bear fruit here as in other parts of the continent.

Part Second

Spanish Women

Chapter XII

The Condition of Spain before the Moorish Invasion

XII

THE CONDITION OF SPAIN BEFORE THE MOORISH INVASION

TO one whose fancy roves to Spain in his dream of fair women there comes at once the picture of a dark-eyed beauty gazing out discreetly from behind her lattice window, listening to the tinkling sound of her lover's mandolin, and sighing at the ardor of his passion; or again, she may be going abroad, with lace mantilla about her shapely head, armed with her fan,—that article of comfort and coquetry, as it has been called,—which is at once a shield and an allurement as wielded by her deft fingers. With the thought of Spain there comes also the snap of the castanets and the flash of bright-colored skirts as they move in time to the *tarantella*. All in all, it is the poet's land of beauty and pleasure, music and the dance, with *Dolce far niente* as its motto, rose-entwined.

Free from the poet's spell, however, and under the guidance of the sterner muse of history, this picture of sweet content vanishes for a time as the more rugged outlines of another and an earlier age attract our attention. Fact and conjecture are somewhat intermingled as they concern the early history of Spain, but enough is known to give us a fairly clear idea of the general condition of the country. The original inhabitants of the peninsula—the Iberians—antedate authentic historical records, but

some centuries before the Christian era it is certain that there was a Celtic invasion from the North which resulted in a mingling of these two races and the appearance of the Celtiberians. The life of these early inhabitants was rude and filled with privations, but they were brave and hardy, having no fear of pain or danger, and possessed by the love of liberty. In this primitive society the occupations of the men were almost exclusively those connected with the pursuit of war, and the wives and mothers were given a large measure of domestic responsibility and were treated with great respect. To them was intrusted not only the education of the younger children, but the care of the land as well, and there is nothing to show that they failed in either of these duties. They were more than good mothers and good husbandmen, however, for more than once, in case of need, these early Spanish women donned armor and fought side by side with their husbands and brothers, sword or lance in hand, nothing daunted by the fierceness of the struggle and always giving a good account of themselves in the thick of the battle.

Hannibal's wife was a woman of Spain, it is true, but it is to her less eminent sisters that we must turn in order to discover the most conspicuous cases of feminine bravery and heroism, which are accompanied in almost every instance by a similar record for the men, as the lot of men and women was cast along the same lines in those days, and the national traits are characteristic of either sex. A most fervid patriotism was inbred in these people, and throughout all the long years of Roman conquest and depredation these native Celtiberians, men and women, proved time and time again that they knew the full significance of the Latin phrase which came from the lips of their conquerors—*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* [It is sweet and glorious to die for one's country]. When Hannibal

essayed to capture the stronghold of Saguntum, a fortified city on the eastern coast of Spain, and probably of Phœnician origin, he found himself confronted by no easy task. On account of his early residence in Spain and his familiarity with the people and the country, he had found its conquest an affair of no great difficulty for the most part, but here at Saguntum all the conditions were changed. The resistance was most stubborn, in spite of the fact that the besieging force consisted of one hundred and fifty thousand men. Hannibal himself was wounded while fighting under the walls; and when the end came, the fall of Saguntum was due to famine rather than to the force of arms. Then the Saguntines, men, women, and children, were of the opinion that surrender was ignoble, and they all preferred death at the hands of the enemy to any timorous act of submission.

Some thirteen years later, in B. C. 206, the Romans, who were now making a systematic endeavor to subdue the whole country, laid siege to Ataspa; and although the details of the investment of the city are far from complete, the imperfect records of the event show that the force of the enemy was so overwhelming that the inhabitants of the ill-fated city saw at once the futility of a prolonged resistance and resolved to do or die without delay. Accordingly, a small guard was left behind to kill the women and children and set fire to the town, and the rest of the doughty little garrison, with banners waving and bugles sounding in defiance, sallied forth from the city gates, and each man went to his death with his face to the enemy. The thrilling tale of the final capture of the city of Numantia by Scipio Africanus furnishes but further proof of this indomitable courage of the early Spaniards. After a siege and blockade of sixteen months, the Numantians, threatened by famine, and unable to secure terms of honorable

capitulation, decided that death was better than the horrors of Roman slavery; and so they killed each other in their patriotic zeal, wives and daughters perishing at the hands of their fathers and their husbands, and the last man, after setting fire to the town, threw himself into the flames. When the Roman conquerors marched through the stricken city they could discover nothing but "ruin, blood, solitude, and horror." By B. C. 72 practically all of Spain had submitted to the Romans, but Pompey found to his surprise that the old Spanish spirit was not entirely dead when he attempted to take possession of the town of Calahorra on the Ebro. The details of the affair almost pass belief. As usual, the defence was dogged; and when the town was threatened with famine, it is said that the men not only killed the women and children, but actually salted their flesh and stored it for future consumption! This was not mere savagery, it was fanatic devotion to a patriotic principle, and there is naught to show that the deed was done under protest from the victims.

The superior organization of the Romans was bound to conquer, however, in the end, and by the time of Julius Cæsar the whole country had been subjected. This gradual supremacy of the Romans was accompanied by a gradual dying out of those early, sturdy virtues which had so marked the Spanish people. Life in that pre-Christian era had been rude and uncouth; there was little education or refinement; but there was a certain rugged nobility of character which cannot but command our admiration. The general manners and customs of the time are, for the most part, marked by great decency and purity; women justly merited the respect which was shown them, and the family was recognized as a necessary factor in national strength. As an interesting bit of information which will show, indirectly at least, that women were held in high

regard, it may be noted that a number of old coins have been found, coming from this early day, which bear upon one side a woman's head.

The prosperity which came with the advent of the Romans was the result, in great part, of the unexampled peace which the whole peninsula now enjoyed. The mines were worked, the olive groves yielded a rich harvest of oil, the fields were tilled and much Spanish wheat was sent abroad, and, in everything but the mining, the women worked side by side with the men. Flax had been brought to Spain long before by the Phœnicians, and no special attention had been given to its culture; but now matters were quite changed, and the finest linen to be found in all the Western world came from the dexterous hands of the Spanish women. This time of peace and comfort cannot be considered as an unmixed blessing, however; for with the decline of war the sterner virtues languished, and much of that primitive simplicity of an earlier day lost its freshness and naïveté and gave way to the subtle vices and corrupt influences which never failed to follow in the wake of Latin conquest. The strength and virility of the nation had been sapped by the Romans, as thousands of Spaniards were forced into the Roman legions and forced to fight their oppressors' battles in many distant lands, and very few of them came home even to die. With this enormous depletion of the male population, it was but natural that there should be a certain mixture of races which was not always an aid to public morals. Marriage between Roman citizens and the women of the so-called barbarian nations was rarely recognized by law; many of the Spanish women, as prisoners of war, were sold into slavery; and with such a social system imposed by the conquerors, it is easy to see that contamination was inevitable.

With the gradual decay of Roman power, the colonial dependencies of this great empire were more and more allowed to fall into the almost absolute control of unscrupulous governors, who did not miss an occasion to levy extortionate taxes and manage everything in their own interests. As the natural result of the raids of the barbarian hordes—the Alans, the Suevians, the Vandals, and the Goths—Spain was losing all that semblance of national unity which it had acquired under Roman rule, and was slowly resolving itself into its primitive autonomous towns. Finally, Euric the Goth, who had founded a strong government in what is now southern France, went south of the Pyrenees in the last part of the fifth century, defeated the Roman garrison at Tarragona, and succeeded in making a treaty with the emperor, whereby he was to rule all Spain with the exception of the Suevian territory in the northwest. Now begins that third process of amalgamation which was to aid in the further evolution of the national type. First, the native Iberians were blended with the early Celtic invaders to form the Celtiberian stock, then came the period of Roman control, to say nothing of the temporary Carthaginian occupancy, and now, finally, on the ruins of this Roman province, there rose a Gothic kingdom of power and might. The foundations of Roman social life were already tottering, for it had been established from the beginning upon the notion of family headship, and the individual had no natural rights which the government was bound to respect, and, all in all, it was little calculated to inspire the esteem and confidence of the proud Spaniard, who prized his personal liberty above all else. In literature and in art Roman influences were dominant and permanent, but, as Martin Hume says: "The centralizing governmental traditions which the Roman system had grafted upon the primitive town and

village government of the Celtiberians had struck so little root in Spain during six centuries, that long before the last legionaries left the country the centralized government had fallen away, and the towns with their assembly of all free citizens survived with but little alteration from the pre-Roman period."

This being the case when the Goths appeared, it was easy for them to start out afresh on their own lines, and all the more so as many of their governmental ideas were peculiarly adapted to the Spanish temperament. The Goths at the time of their appearance in Spain were no longer barbarians, as their long contact with Rome had given them ample opportunity for education, and they deserve to be considered as disseminators of civilization. Their easy conquest of Spain can then be accounted for in two ways: first, there was not sufficient warlike spirit in the country to successfully oppose them; secondly, they were hailed as liberators rather than as conquerors, because at their coming the real barbarians, who were still threatening the country, were forced to leave. The central idea of the Gothic social system, which was soon established in all parts of the country, was its recognition of the independence of the individual, and especially of the women of the family. The head of the household did not consider himself as the sole possessor of all rights and privileges; the women and children were expected to do their share of fighting the enemy, and were given their share of food and plunder in all equity. The equality of the wife with her husband was strictly enjoined, not only in the marriage ceremony, but also by law, which gave her full control of her own property and a half-interest in the possessions held by them both in common.

Alaric II. caused to be published in 506 the code of laws which had been compiled by King Euric, but which was

called the *Breviarium Alaricianium,* wherein, among various other matters, the rights of women are especially enforced. This code was intended only for the use of the Goths, who took position at once as a ruling and noble race, and the rest of the population was still governed by the old Roman code. For almost a hundred and fifty years this double system of legal procedure was maintained, and then its many disadvantages became so evident that a vigorous king sought to remedy the tottering fortunes of the Gothic realm by promulgating a single code, to which all should be subject and which should represent the better features of the two codes hitherto in vogue. Chindaswinth, who ruled from 642 to 654, was responsible for this new departure; and his son Recceswinth, who followed him upon the throne, was the first to administer the revised code, which is known as the *Lex Visigothorum.* Although the document is but an adaptation of the Roman law to the special needs of the country from the standpoint of Christianity, it shows at the same time the strong influence of the social traditions of the Goths, and especially with reference to its treatment of women.

It is evident from a perusal of these laws that the Goths had high ideals of family life, and that it was their most earnest endeavor to maintain, by means of legal enactment, a rather unusual state of social purity. Women were held in high esteem and occupied a most respected and influential position, and Cæsar's wife was their common model. The moral condition of the Romanized Spaniards fell far short of the Gothic standards, however, and it is evident that the new code endeavored to correct the numerous social evils which then afflicted the country. The loose habits of the Romans had been followed all too quickly, and the custom of keeping many slaves in a household had led to a domestic promiscuity which was

appalling in some instances, so that the Gothic desire for reform is easily explained. It is interesting to note in this connection that the best account to be found of the moral status of the whole people at this time is contained by implication in the list of things which they are forbidden by law to do. So, the *Lex Visigothorum* is not only a tribute to the moral sense of its promulgators, but at the same time a storehouse of information with regard to a rather obscure period in Spanish history.

All things considered, one of the most startling things in the new code was a severe statute forbidding public prostitutes, for it is somewhat difficult to believe that the moral tone of society at that time would warrant so stringent a measure. A public flogging was prescribed as the penalty which would be inflicted upon all who failed to obey the statute, and it is altogether probable that the law was administered with the same Puritanic rigor which had brought it into existence. Other provisions there were, animated by this same spirit, which were levelled at the social evils incident to the practice of holding slaves. A woman who had intrigued with her own slave or who wished to marry him was condemned to death in the most summary fashion; and even if the man were a freedman, the penalty was just the same. What a glimpse this gives us of the life of the time, when the slaves were often more charming and more intelligent than their rough masters, and how clear it is that the Goths considered a household conducted with decency and with order as an important element in national prosperity and well-being!

As one might naturally expect, the laws relating to the subject of marriage and divorce are equally severe, even when the contracting parties belong to the same class in society. The equality between wife and husband was again provided for, as it had been in the earlier code, and

the woman was again given full control of her own property and a half-interest in the things which had been common property. Once married, divorce was forbidden except in the case of adultery on the woman's part; and though it is clear to see that this was not equal justice for both man and wife, yet such was the fact. When infidelity was proved, the law provided that the wife and her paramour should be delivered up to the tender mercies of the injured husband, who had the right to punish them according to his own inclination. He was given the power of life and death even, under these circumstances, and too often it is to be feared that the punishment became a bloody revenge sanctioned by law. Marriage between Jews and Christians had long been forbidden, as it had been discovered by experience that such a union was bound to lead to proselyting in one form or another; and the death penalty was inflicted upon all who were not content to abide by the statute. Marriage between Goths and Romans had been legalized in 652, but for many years before that time the two races had been kept apart; for the Goths, as the ruling race, considered it prejudicial to their interests to ally themselves in this way with their subjects.

Woman's place in the criminal procedure of the time was unique. It appears that the punishment inflicted for any given crime depended not so much upon the importance of the offence as upon the importance of the criminal, and that almost every injury might be atoned for by the payment of a certain sum of money, the amount depending upon the rank of the person making the payment. Such money payments, wherever a woman was involved, were regulated according to the following scale of values: from her birth to the age of fifteen, she was valued at only one-half the price of a man of her own class; from fifteen to twenty, she was considered of equal value; from twenty

to forty, she was rated as worth one-sixth less than a man; and after forty, at even less than half. Inasmuch as both men and women were amenable to the same laws with but this difference in the amount of the penalty in any given case, it would appear that women were recognized to possess a smaller money-earning power than the men; and such was undoubtedly the case, in spite of the fact that both men and women seemed to share alike the various daily tasks in the earlier and simpler days of Gothic rule in Spain. Such participation on the part of the women was by no means common among the Romans, and this fact, together with the spread of slavery, did much to put the women in this secondary position, so far as ability to work was concerned.

With all this apparent equality in fact and in the eyes of the law, it is somewhat doubtful whether or not the wives and mothers really enjoyed a high degree of personal liberty. Their legal rights were clearly defined, but it is certain that they were looked upon as inferior beings. The prevalent customs with regard to the marriage dower show in no uncertain fashion that the wife was considered to a certain extent as the chattel and property of her husband; for a woman could not marry without a dower, but it was paid not by but to her parents, and by her future husband. A marriage of that description may be likened to the sale of a bill of goods. In further proof of this dependent position of the women, and to show the care which was taken to protect them from contamination of any kind, one of the statutes regulating the practice of medicine presents certain interesting features. This law prohibited surgeons from bleeding any freewoman except in the presence of her husband, her nearest relative, or at least of some properly appointed witness. A Salic law dating from about the same period imposed a fine of fifteen

pieces of gold upon anyone who should improperly press a woman's hand, but there seems to be nothing to show that the Goths considered legislation upon this important point necessary. Even under these conditions the physician's position was somewhat precarious, as it was provided that in case he should withdraw enough of the patient's blood to cause death, he became the slave of the patient's heir at law!

Spain was like the greater part of the rest of Europe at this time with regard to its intellectual atmosphere; Christianity and Roman civilization had not yet succeeded in stamping out the old pagan beliefs of the early inhabitants, and superstition and ignorance were for a long time characteristic traits of the majority of the people. The air was peopled with demons, the devil himself was no infrequent visitor, witches and fortune tellers were not without influence, and stealthily, by night, many mystic rites were celebrated. Many of the Christian beliefs of the time are likewise the result of ignorance and superstition, but at that time, naturally, only the pagan ideas were condemned. Accordingly, while the law of the Goths recognized trial by ordeal, wherein God is summoned to bear miraculous witness in favor of the innocent, the same law condemned belief in witchcraft! The favorite ordeal among the Goths was trial by red-hot iron. The Church took charge of this ceremony, which was accompanied by a most solemn ritual, and all this was legal and religious and approved by the highest authorities! But the poor witches had to go! It was charged that they were able to produce storm and ruin by means of their incantations, that they offered nightly sacrifices to devils, and that in general they were in league with the powers of darkness and productive of much disorder. Furthermore, soothsayers were not to be consulted concerning the death of a king; and any

freeman disobeying this edict was soundly flogged, lost his property by confiscation, and was condemned to perpetual servitude. These mysterious and redoubtable old women who gathered simples upon the mountain side and dealt in the black art had formerly been very numerous, and, although they have always continued to exist in Spain, their number was much diminished by means of the enforcement of the new law.

In addition to the various social and political questions which were demanding settlement at this time, there was a matter of ecclesiastical difference which caused great trouble and confusion. The Goths, though Christians, belonged to the Arian branch of the Church, while the Spaniards were firm believers in the Athanasian or Latin form of Christianity, and the struggle for supremacy between the two went on for many years before either side was willing to submit. Near the beginning of the sixth century, Clothilda, daughter of the Frankish king, Clovis, was married to Amalaric, the Gothic king, whose capital was then in the old city of Narbonne. Political advantages were supposed to come from this international alliance, but the results were quite to the contrary. The queen was an Athanasian, and the king an Arian Catholic, and neither was willing to endure the heresy of the other. Amalaric used his most persuasive arts in his attempts to win over his wife to the Gothic point of view, but his endeavor was in vain, and she remained obstinately true to the God of her fathers. Finally, irritated beyond measure, the king ordered that Clothilda should no longer be allowed to make public profession of her religion, and the result was a merry war which led to the defeat and final death of the Arian sovereign. Late in this same sixth century there was in Spain another Frankish queen, who not only held steadfastly to her own faith, but was the indirect means

whereby all the country was induced to abandon the Arian creed. The native Catholic clergy, under the leadership of Leander, a most noted churchman, and Bishop of Seville, had long urged the necessity of such a change, but the Goths were unwilling to submit; and so matters stood until Prince Hermenegild, urged on by Leander, and most of all by his wife Ingunda, led a revolt against his father, King Leovgild. The revolt was not a success, but the star of the Athanasian party was rising rapidly, and the open stand of the queen for the Latin doctrines gave great impetus and power to the whole movement. The triumph was complete when Leovgild's son and heir, Recared, saw that further opposition was useless and publicly announced his conversion to the faith of Rome.

In the early history of the Church in Spain there are many interesting references to women which are not generally known, but which reveal, on the whole, a condition of affairs similar to that which was to be found in other parts of Europe at the same time. Monasteries were probably unknown in the peninsula before the middle of the sixth century, but from a very early day it is certain that women as well as men were taking vows of perpetual chastity and devoting themselves to a life of holy works. Early in the fourth century the Council of Elvira prescribed penalties for professed nuns who might desire to reënter the world, and the Council of Saragossa, in 380, declared that no virgin should be allowed to devote herself to a religious life until she had reached the mature age of forty years. That same Council of Elvira was the first in the history of the Church to ordain the celibacy of the secular clergy, and its thirty-third canon forbade the bishops, priests, and deacons of the peninsula to live as husbands with their wives. In the year 591, the first Synod of Toledo, over which Bishop Leander presided,

enacted various canons which give some interesting sidelights on the times. It appears that ecclesiastics had already been forbidden to keep women servants in their houses, but the rule was so often disregarded that it was enacted that in the future, as a punishment for such intractable churchmen, their servants should be sold as slaves and the proceeds handed over to some charitable organization. In just what way this punishment was to affect the clergy, beyond causing them temporary annoyance, it is difficult to understand, but there is no doubt as to the fact.

In all of the seven centuries preceding the Moorish conquest of Spain there had been some little progress, so far as the position of women was concerned, but it cannot be said that the advance had been great. The original Gothic ideas on this subject had been far superior to those held by the Romans, but the rigor of the old ideas lost force in time, and, if the accounts of the Church historians be true, the last Goths to wield the sceptre were so corrupt and led such abandoned lives that God, in his vengeance, sent the Mohammedan horde upon them. In all these shifting times the conditions of life were such that few women were able to take any prominent part in public affairs; or if they did, the imperfect records of the epoch fail to make mention of it. At intervals there were queens, like Ingunda, possessed of a strong and decided character and ready to take a part in the control of affairs, but they were the exception and not the rule, as the education of women was so very limited that few of them knew enough to see beyond a very narrow horizon. Probably the most enlightened woman in all this period was the nun Florentina, sister of Bishop Leander of Seville, who was far-famed for her good works. At the time of her death in 603, she had risen to such distinction on account of her character and her ability that she was made the general

director of a system of over forty convents, which were under her continual inspection and control. Such, in brief, is her story; further details are wanting, but even this is enough to impress us with the fact that she must have been a great woman and representative of all that was good and noble in her day.

Chapter XIII

Women among the Moors

XIII

WOMEN AMONG THE MOORS

THE closing years of Gothic rule in Spain, and the various causes which finally led to the Moorish invasion, are somewhat involved in legend and mystery. But in spite of a scepticism which has been openly expressed by some authors, it seems more than probable that the fabled Rodrigo, from his capital at Toledo, actually ruled over Spain in the year 709, and that he was, directly or indirectly, the cause of the invasion of the Moors. According to the commonly accepted story, the moral condition of Spain at the beginning of the eighth century was most deplorable. The Goths had lost that reputation for honesty and chastity which in the earlier days of their power had distinguished them from the Romans. Rodrigo, "the last of the Goths," lived a life of such flagrant profligacy that the coming of the Moors was but just punishment for all his sins. As Miss Yonge has remarked, "the fall of Gothic Spain was one of the disasters that served to justify the saying that all great catastrophes are caused by women." The woman in the present instance was Florinda, often called La Cava, reputed to be the daughter of Count Julian, commander of the south of Spain and in charge of the fortress of Ceuta. Although Rodrigo already possessed a wife, Egilona, who was a brilliant, able, and beautiful woman, he was a man of little moral force and had a roving eye and lusty passions. Seeing Florinda

once upon a time, he coveted her, succeeded in winning her affections, and was not content until he had betrayed her confidence and brought dishonor upon her and her father. Count Julian, filled with a righteous anger at this unwarranted act on the part of his liege lord, openly revolted, called in the Moors, and unwittingly opened his country to an invader who would be slow to leave. The story is told in the old ballad, as follows:

"Long had the crimes of Spain cried out to Heaven:
At length the measure of offence was full.
Count Julian called the invader . . .
. . . Mad to wreak
His vengeance for his deeply injured child
On Roderick's head, an evil hour for Spain,
For that unhappy daughter, and himself.
Desperate apostate, on the Moors he called,
And, like a cloud of locusts, whom the wind
Wafts from the plains of wasted Africa,
The Mussulman upon Iberia's shores
Descends. A countless multitude they came:
Syrian, Moor, Saracen, Greek renegade,
Persian, and Copt, and Latin, in one band
Of erring faith conjoined, strong in the youth
And heat of zeal, a dreadful brotherhood.

La Cava, the name by which Florinda has been called ever since by the Spaniards, means "the wicked one," and the general theory has been that, in spite of her betrayed innocence, she has been held in execration for all that followed. Others, however, have pointed out the discrepancy between the generally acknowledged purity of character of Florinda and the meaning of *La Cava*, and it is their opinion that Count Julian's daughter is merely legendary, and that *La Cava* refers in some allegorical way to the dissolute and voluptuous life which Rodrigo had been leading and which was in itself a good and sufficient reason for all the misfortunes which were to follow.

While all is not clear as to the reason for the invitation to come to Spain, there is no cause to doubt that it was accepted in a most hearty manner. Modern historians do not hesitate to say that the Catholic churchmen, not realizing the danger, invited the Moslems to aid them in repressing a revolt among the Gothic nobles. However the case may have been, Mousa, the Berber chieftain, sent his bravest sheik, Tarik, with a goodly following, to lead the invasion. The white-turbaned warriors crossed the strait between what had always been called the Pillars of Hercules, and landed upon that great rock which has ever since borne that leader's name, Gebel-al-Tarik—Gibraltar —the "rock of Tarik." Rodrigo, with an army of about eighty thousand men, which he had hastily gathered together, hastened to meet the invaders, and the two armies met on the banks of the Guadelete. Egilona, Roderick's wife, was left with a safe guard in the strongly fortified town of Meriba, while the "last of the Goths," in shining armor and wearing a helmet adorned with horns of gold, such as may be seen upon old Gothic coins, fought vainly against the terrible horsemen of the deserts. *La bataille est merveillose e pesant,* to quote the words of the *Song of Roland,* describing that other battle, between the Franks and the Moors, some sixty-five years later in the fatal pass of Roncesvalles; the Goths were overwhelmingly defeated, and Rodrigo disappeared in a most mysterious way, leaving his crown and sceptre upon the river bank. Mousa, with another invading force, had followed close upon the heels of Tarik, and he it was who pushed on to Meriba and laid siege to the town, knowing full well that the queen was within the gates, while Tarik, by a series of easy conquests, made his way to Toledo. When the siege came to a close and the Berbers entered the fortifications, they were amazed at the richness and vast amount of

treasure which fell into their hands. The jewel caskets of Egilona in particular excited their wonder and admiration, and so many chains of gold and precious stones did they find among her possessions that she was straightway named "the Mother of Necklaces." When the spoils of battle were divided, the fair captive queen fell to the lot of Mousa's son, Abdul Aziz, who had been made ruler over the newly conquered territory. The young Moorish prince was soon a slave to the charms of Egilona, and so great did his love for her become that he married her, with the promise that he would always regard her as queen and would never marry again; he never broke that promise. Seville was his capital, and there his power was so great that the kalif in Damascus, fearing that he might attempt to rule independently, sent out men to take his life. These assassins found him so beloved by his soldiers that they feared to attack him until they had circulated the rumor that Egilona was about to convert him to the Christian faith and that he would soon wear a crown upon his head, like any Christian king. After this story had been spread abroad, the kalif's men followed Aziz to a small mosque, where he went sometimes to pray, cut off his head, and showed it in the public place, with the order for his death.

The Goths were driven to the north and west of the peninsula, while the Moors, in the rich country to the south and east, strengthened their position and laid the foundations for that empire which was to have such a long and brilliant history. In the middle of the eighth century the kalif at Damascus had lost his power to so great an extent that the seat of government was transferred to Cordova, where Abd-el-Rhaman I. reigned for more than a quarter of a century as the first kalif of the Moslem Church resident in Spain. On the borderland there was continual fighting between the Moors and the Christians, and many

are the legends which tell of this spirited epoch. The Christians had rallied about the standards of various leaders in the hill countries, and they fought among themselves quite as much as with the Moslem foe. There are even stories to the effect that Christian leaders made alliances with the Moors for more successful forays upon their Christian neighbors, and there are also legends of shameful peace which was bought at the price of Christian tribute. Among all these tales of tribute, that which has most fired the national spirit and inspired the ballad writers is the story of the tribute of a hundred Christian maidens, which was paid by King Ramiro. The indignation of the people at this unworthy act and the reproaches of the Spanish women, who preferred the hardships of war to this cowardly repose, are well expressed in the following verses from the ballad which sings of the cessation of the tribute, wherein a Spanish damsel addresses the king:

"I know not if I'm bounden to call thee by the name
Of Christian, Don Ramiro, for though thou dost not claim
A heathen realm's allegiance, a heathen sure thou art—
Beneath a Spaniard's mantle thou hid'st a Moorish heart.

"For he who gives the Moslem king a hundred maids of Spain,
Each year when in its season the day comes round again,
If he be not a heathen, he swells the heathen's train:
'Twere better burn a kingdom than suffer such disdain.

"And if 'tis fear of battle that makes ye bow so low,
And suffer such dishonor from God our Savior's foe,
I pray you, sirs, take warning, ye'll have as good a fright
If e'er the Spanish damsels arise themselves to right."

The Moorish conquest had been rapidly made, and generally very little resistance was offered to the advance of the invaders. The emasculating influences of the Roman decadence had been at work to such effect that the sturdy traits of the Goth had disappeared, and there was no real

national spirit or energy sufficient for the national defence. To the credit of the Moors, it must be said that their conquest was ever marked by mercy and large-mindedness; and in spite of their absolute power and their intense religious zeal, they permitted the subdued people to enjoy many liberties. Chief among them was their right to worship as Christians, retaining their clergy and their liturgy, which had been compiled by the Spanish bishops Leander and Ildefonso. Christian zeal, however, was not satisfied with a state of inaction. Many times a number of people went to what they considered a glorious martyrdom as the result of their intemperate denunciations of the Koran and the sons of the Prophet. Christianity was allowed to exist without hindrance, but the Moors would not permit criticism of their own faith, and this was natural enough. Several of these Christian martyrs were women, and their stubborn love for their religion cannot but excite our sympathy, however ill advised and unavailing it may have been. The story is told of two poor young girls, Muñila and Alodia, the children of a Moslem father and a Christian mother, who had carefully brought them up in her own faith. These maidens became so beautiful that they were called "roses springing from thorns." As the story goes, "their father died and their mother married a less tolerant Moslem, who, finding their faith proof against his threats, brought them before the Kadi. Splendid marriages were offered them if they would quit the Christian faith: but they answered that they knew of no spouse equal to their Lord, no bliss comparable to what He could bestow: and persuasion and torture alike failed with them, until they sealed their confession with their lives." The rage for martyrdom now seemed to grow, and there is a long list of those who went to death as the result of their voluntary acts. Conspicuous here is the case of a wealthy

young woman named Columba, who left the Moslem Church, in spite of the entreaties of her family, and entered a convent at Tabanos. By order of the authorities, the other nuns of the establishment were taken to Cordova and locked up, that they might not become violent in their talk and bring destruction upon themselves as the result of their intemperate acts; and Columba was kept in solitary confinement, in the hope that she might be induced to abjure her newly found faith. But she refused to change her belief in any way, and one day escaped, went at once and reviled Mohammed before the kadi, and went to her death, as was inevitable, according to the law of the land.

In the middle of the ninth century, Eulogius, the recently elected Metropolitan Bishop of Toledo, was considered too zealous and too uncompromising in his beliefs, and he was soon summoned before the divan to answer to the charge of participation in the flight and conversion of a Moslem lady, who had taken the name of Leocritia, under which she was canonized at a later date. It was said that the woman had become a Christian through his efforts, and that he had hidden her for a time in the house of his sister. He was decapitated, and his body was thrown into the river; and if the legend be true, a white dove flew over it as it floated down the stream. Leocritia also was put to death. Here, however, the record of these martyrdoms apparently comes to an end, and the force of the folly seems to have spent itself. The Mohammedans were growing more strict all the time in their treatment of the Christians, but the futility of such self-sought martyrdom was finally becoming apparent.

Before the time of these religious disturbances the Moors had not molested the Christians in any way, and the two nations lived side by side in rather friendly intercourse.

Intermarriages were not infrequent, and both Moorish and Christian women lived much the same outward life. Each Moor was allowed four wives by law; and while the women of his household were compelled to submit to certain restrictions, their manner of life was far less secluded than that of the average woman of the modern Orient. They went about veiled up to the eyes, and were never allowed to eat with the men; but, socially, men and women mingled together on terms of equality, and their conversations and common enjoyment of music and poetry were unrestricted. In the most brilliant period of the kalifate of Cordova,—between the years 888 and 967,—when the Moors were acknowledged to be the most enlightened people of all Europe, their women were not excluded from participation in educational pursuits. While few if any of them became the intellectual equals of the men, many of them learned enough to become helpful companions for their husbands—and that is not such a bad idea for women's education, even in these modern days, if the voice of the men is to be heard in the land. In Seville a lady named Maryam founded a school for girls, where they were taught science, mathematics, and history, in addition to the various feminine accomplishments of the time. With regard to the mysteries of their attire, this subject can best be treated by a woman who knows whereof she speaks. Miss Yonge, in her interesting book on the Christians and Moors in Spain, has the following to say on the subject: "Their dress was much the same as that of the ladies of North Africa. Full white muslin trousers were tied at the ankle, and a long, full, white *gilalah,* a mantle of transparent muslin, covered the tighter vest and jacket, both of brilliant colors, over which they wore gold chains, necklaces, and bracelets, with strings of coral, pearl, and amber; while their hair was in little curls,

adorned with jewels and flowers. But all this was concealed by the thick, muffling, outer veil; they also had horsehair visards through which they could see without being seen."

With the growth and consolidation of Moslem power in Spain, and as the natural result of the great progress in the mechanic arts of all kinds, life became luxurious and filled with comforts far outside the ken of the sturdy Spanish patriots, who, from their mountain strongholds, were still battling against the rule of the infidel. The effect of all this elegance and refinement was evident in the whole atmosphere of Moorish society, and the beautiful homes of these wonderful people were filled with the most rare and costly works of art. An illustration of how necessary all these luxuries of life finally became to the Mohammedans is found in the statement that the sheik of a tribe on a pilgrimage to Mecca carried with him a whole caravan of dependents and slaves. He had silver ovens in which to bake fresh bread every day, and his camels bore leathern bags filled with snow that he might drink iced sherbet in the midst of the desert. A Moorish general carried to his camp an immense following of women, slaves, musicians, and court poets, and in his pavilioned tent, on the very eve of a battle, there were often feasting and dancing and much merriment, just as if he had been in his sumptuous home at Cordova.

The Moors were generous and public-spirited, and much given to display. The marriage feast which was prepared by Almanzor the Invincible, for his son, in the year 1000, presents a picture of glittering splendor which has been described more than once. Abd-el-Malek was the son's name, and he was being married to his own cousin, one of the most beautiful of the Moorish maidens. The feast took place in the gardens about Almanzor's beautiful

country place, Almeria, where at night the whole estate was illuminated by means of lamps which were fastened to every tree and shrub. Musicians, far out upon the lakes, discoursed sweet music from boats which were hung with silken tapestries, and the whole night was given over to pleasures. As a reminder of the customs of the desert tribes, who used to carry off their wives by force, the bride was placed in a spacious pavilion of white silk, where she was carefully guarded by her maids in waiting, each armed with a cunningly wrought wand of ivory and gold. The bridegroom and his attendants came upon them suddenly, however, brandishing gilt maces, and after a mimic struggle, where all was mirth and laughter, the guard of love was overcome and the bride was won. This wedding feast brought joy, not only to those who actively participated in its pleasures, but also to many of the common people; for Almanzor gave dowries to a large number of orphan girls, endowed a large number of schools and colleges, and put new uniforms upon all the members of his bodyguard.

With the death of the great Kalif Al Hakem II.—976—the power of Islam in Spain began slowly to decline. His son and heir, Heschem II., was but a youth of ten, and the Arabs called him Al Mowayed Bi'llah, "the Protected by God." Though the law required that the Ruler of the Faithful should be more than fifteen years old, Heschem was at once proclaimed kalif, although he was given no share in the government. His mother, Sobeyah, the Sultana of Cordova, had acquired some experience in affairs of state during the last few years of her husband's life; now, to help her in her regency, she appointed as her grand vizier Mohammed-ben-Abd-Allah, a man of wonderful power and ability and no other than Almanzor the Invincible, who has already been mentioned. Almanzor had

entered the public service as a court scribe, and it was there that, by the charm of his manner and the nobility of his bearing, he first attracted the attention of Sobeyah. The all-powerful sultana was not slow in yielding to his many graces, and he soon became her acknowledged favorite and rose to high positions in the state. It was but natural, then, that Sobeyah should turn to him for aid when her husband's death was announced. On account of the minority of her son, there was an attempt on the part of many in the palace to deprive the sultana of her authority, depose her son, and usurp the office of kalif. Sobeyah, hard pressed and all but defeated, turned to her lover, Almanzor, who suppressed the intrigue and brought order out of confusion. Enjoying as he did the full confidence of the sultana, Almanzor undertook the entire administration of the kingdom as if he had been kalif in name as well as in fact, and his success in all his various undertakings was most wonderful. Heschem, the real kalif, was a virtual prisoner in his harem, and was encouraged by his guardian and friends to devote himself entirely to a religious life, leaving all the cares of state to his mother Sobeyah and to the vizier. Step by step, Almanzor ascended to a position of such power and authority that the sultana became jealous of his might and lost her love in an attempt to regain her authority. In 992, according to Burke, Almanzor used his seal in place of the royal seal on all official documents. In 993 he assumed the royal cognomen of Mowayed. Two years later he arrogated to himself, alone, the title of *saïd,* and in 996 he ventured a step further and assumed the title of *mâlik karim,* or king. Then it was that Sobeyah determined to reassert her power, cause the overthrow of this ambitious favorite, and rule henceforth in her own name. The officers of the harem and the various court officials were

easily won over to her party; the young kalif was urged to assert his manhood, declare himself, throw off the influence of his dreaded guardian, and give active support to the cause of his mother. The sultana became exultant as victory seemed assured. Secretly, she summoned one of Almanzor's military rivals from Africa, that she might have a leader for her forces in the field. The public treasury was at her disposal, and no stone was left unturned to secure ultimate success. As the final *coup,* the vizier was banished from the royal presence and forbidden to enter the palace. But Almanzor was still the Invincible. Giving no heed to the terms of his banishment, he made his way into the presence of the kalif; and there, by bold yet subtle argument, he not only succeeded in regaining the royal favor, but secured from Heschem a solemn instrument, signed with the royal sign manual, whereby he was empowered to assume the government of the entire kingdom. This was the same tragic story which was to be acted over again in the early part of the seventeenth century, in France, when the great prime minister, the Cardinal Richelieu, his jealous rival, the queen-mother, and the weak king, Louis XIII., were more than once engaged in a struggle for power, which ended invariably in the success of the minister. It is difficult to find a more striking historical coincidence, and the case is worthy of remark. In his success, Almanzor showed no hate for his one-time protectress, who had so nearly caused his ruin, and in his administration of affairs he left her entire liberty of action. But her last vestige of power had departed, her most loyal followers had been induced to abandon her cause after the defection of the kalif himself, and Sobeyah, who had been the most powerful of all the Moorish sultanas of Cordova, was now forced in humiliation to withdraw from active participation in worldly affairs and to spend

the few remaining years of her life in strict seclusion in a lonely cloister.

In the last part of the eleventh century there were troublous times for the Moors. For a number of years there had been no strong central power among them, and the various emirs who were the rulers of the different parts of the peninsula were so intent upon their own affairs, and so consumed by greed and selfishness, that the general cause suffered mightily and the Spanish Christians grew bolder and bolder in their attacks. Alfonso VI. of Castile was their leader. The danger of total extinction finally became so great that the emirs were induced to join forces for their personal safety and to take measures to preserve their towns and cities. Realizing their helpless condition, they sent a letter to Yousouf-ben-Tashfyn, Prince of the Almoravides, a Mohammedan tribe of Africa, asking him to come with his hosts to help them do battle against the infidel. Certain portions of this invitation reveal so clearly the deplorable conditions of Moorish society at this time that it is well worth while to spend a moment in their perusal:

"We, the Arabs of Andalusia, have not preserved our illustrious tribes: we have dispersed and intermixed them, and have long had no fellowship with our tribes and families who dwell in Africa. Want of union has led to discord, and our natural enemies are prevailing against us. Each day becometh more unbearable the fury of King Alfonso, who like a mad dog enters our lands, takes our castles, makes Moslems captive, and will tread us under foot unless an emir from Africa will arise to defend the oppressed, who behold the ruin of their kindred, their neighbors, and even of their law. They are no more what they once were. Pleasures, amusements, the sweet climate of Andalusia, delicious baths of fragrant waters, fountains and

dainty meats, have enervated them so that they dare not face the toils of war. If thou art moved by desire of earthly wealth, here wilt thou find rich carpets, jewels of gold and silver, precious raiment, delicious gardens, and clear springs of flowing water. But if thine heart seeks only to win eternal life in Allah's service, here is the opportunity, for never are wanting bloody battles, skirmishes, and fights. Here has Allah placed a paradise that from the shadow of weapons thou mayest pass to the everlasting shadow where he rewards the deserving."

Moved by such an appeal, Yousouf came with his armies, defeated the Christians under Alfonso at the terrible battle of Zalakah, and would have followed up his victory had he not been recalled to Morocco by the death of his son. He returned to Spain soon after, however, and then began a conquest in his own interests, having made up his mind that the emirs could be easily dispossessed and that it would be good to rule as the absolute master of all Andalusia. Beginning with Granada, he attacked the emirs each in turn, and in the end subdued them all. Aben Abed, the Emir of Seville and one of the most learned men in Spain, was so beside himself at the thought of this possible defeat, that he sought for aid in any quarter and finally entreated the assistance of the redoubtable Alfonso, his late enemy. As proof of his good faith and by way of inducement, Aben Abed decided to offer to Alfonso the hand of his daughter, Zaida, in marriage. If the traditions be correct, Zaida was a Christian at heart, in spite of her Mohammedan education and surroundings, as the Castilians claimed that she had been converted in a dream in which Saint Isidoro had come to her and prevailed upon her to change her faith. In any event, Alfonso seems to have been only too glad to accept this offer, and Zaida was accordingly escorted in great state to Toledo, which

had lately been wrested from the Moors; there she was baptized as Maria Isabella, and then married to the king with much ceremony. This Moorish princess was a perfect beauty of the Oriental type, with dark hair and oval face, and Alfonso may well have been enamored of her charms; but he was no less enamored of her marriage portion, which consisted of the rich cities of Cucuça, Ucles, and Huate. The new queen was hailed with joy by the Christians, as her conversion was considered prophetic of the ultimate and complete success of Alfonso's armies. Unfortunately, Zaida lived for but a short time after her marriage; she died in giving birth to Alfonso's only son, who was named Sancho. Aben Abed's alliance with the Christian monarch for their mutual defence was without final result, however, as he was at last compelled to surrender Seville in 1091, after a stubborn resistance. Aben Abed was exiled, with his wife and daughters, and was sent to the castle of Aginât, in Africa, to live his life away. There, if the reports be true, their food was so scanty that the ladies of the family had to spin to get enough for them all to eat, while the despondent emir tried to beguile the weary hours with poetry. The hardships of their life were so great that finally the emir was left alone in his captivity, and it was four long years before he could follow them in death.

In the latter part of the fourteenth century, the little kingdom of Granada was the most prosperous part of the Moorish territory, and its brilliant life seemed to recall for a moment the splendors of Cordova. Chivalry, driven from southern France by the Albigensian Crusade, had been slowly growing in importance among the Spaniards of the north, and the Moors were not slow in following the courteous spirit and in adopting its code of truth and honor. Mohammed V. controlled the destinies of the

Granadine kingdom at this time; and when his son, Aben-Abd-Allah, was married to the daughter of the Emir of Fez, there was a succession of the most splendid fêtes and tournaments, which were attended by knights not only from Christian Spain but also from Italy and France. Chivalry was essentially a Christian institution, but its outer forms were readily taken up by the Moors and practised to such an extent that their influence upon society and social conventions soon began to show itself in a most surprising way. The women of the harems, who in former days were generally considered, after the Eastern fashion, as beings who were not to be mentioned, now occupy a more honorable position, and it is recounted that the men "wore the devices of their lady-loves on the rich housings of their steeds—hearts pierced with arrows, a sail guiding a ship, an initial, and in colors denoting their state of mind: yellow and black for grief, green for hope, blue for jealousy, violet and flame for ardent love. Large assemblies were held in the beautiful houses and gardens, where hunting, poetry, music, and dancing were the chief occupations; but the grave learning and earnestness of Al Hakem's days had passed away, and the enjoyments had become far more sensual and voluptuous than in his time." It is evident that the frugal, stern, uncompromising sons of the Prophet of an earlier day were becoming men of little faith in many particulars, and that they had fallen far below the standard of life which had characterized their ancestors. But in this state of moral degeneracy it is gratifying to note that the position of women has been much improved and that they are no longer regarded as mere slaves. The customs of chivalry, as has been indicated, were responsible for much of this, but the influence of the many Spanish women who were held as captives in the harems must not be overlooked.

The closing years of Moorish dominion in Spain were marked by many adventures of a most romantic character, which have been made familiar to the world at large by Washington Irving. When Aboul Hacem came to the throne in 1466, the Mohammedan power was already tottering; but there were troubles in Castile which emboldened the king to such an extent that, in 1476, when the regular demand for tribute money was presented, he is said to have made answer: "Those who coined gold for you are dead. Nothing is made at Granada for the Christians but sword-blades and lance-points." Although ultimate success for the Moors was now entirely out of the question, their final defence was not what it might have been—a state of affairs which was the result of various contentions that emanated largely from the harem. Conspicuous in these intrigues was Zoraya, "the Morning Star," a renegade Christian who was the favorite wife of the king. Though childless, Zoraya had interested herself in Boabdil, the son of another wife, Ayescha, and had determined to drive Aboul Hacem from his throne, that his son might rule in his place. So formidable did the plot become that the king was forced to imprison Ayescha and Boabdil in a certain quarter of the harem; but their captivity was short, as they were soon put at liberty by friendly hands. Twisting a rope from the veils of the sultana's women in waiting, wife and son let themselves down from a window and sought refuge among their supporters. Countless quarrels followed, which ended in Boabdil's final success, and in them all, Zoraya was his firm friend and adviser. But success at such a time and for such a cause was little more than failure, and the day was soon to come when sultanas and intriguing harem favorites could no longer trouble the land with their contentions; for the power of Isabella the Catholic was soon to be felt, and the doom of the Moor had been sounded.

Chapter XLV

The Women of the Little Monarchies

XIV

THE WOMEN OF THE LITTLE MONARCHIES

IN spite of the fact that Spain was an easy conquest for the Moors and that whole cities surrendered to the invaders without having struck a single blow in their own defence, it must not be supposed that there was no opposition whatever and no show of Spanish patriotism. The great mass of the population, it is true, were yielding and willing to accept any terms, so long as they were allowed to live unmolested. Such were the Romanized Spaniards, who formed a majority of the population, but who had long been held in subjection by the masterful Goths. As a race they lacked energy and vitality, and they were too corrupt and pleasure-loving to be moved by patriotic instincts in such a time of national crisis. A certain portion of the Goths, however, after their defeat at the battle of Guadalete, decided to renounce their lands and all their possessions rather than live under the rule of the Mohammedans; and with their wives and children and such little treasure as they could hurriedly get together, they set out for the north and found a refuge in the rocky slopes of the Pyrenees. The mountain passes were not under the control of any of these Christian refugees, and the Moors were free to advance on the fair fields of southern France so long as they did not turn aside to molest the Spanish patriots. When they did make such attack, the

fortunes of war were generally against them, and more than once those modes of mountain warfare were employed which at an earlier date wrought such great havoc with the hosts of Charlemagne at the pass of Roncesvalles. In these desperate conflicts, as in the olden time when the Celtiberians were trying to beat back the power of Rome, the women were not slow to take their place beside their fathers and husbands at the first wild call to arms. The old Moorish leader Mousa had spoken well when he told the kalif at Damascus that the Christians of Spain were lions in their castles, and the Moors were repeatedly given ample proof of the wisdom of his observation.

"Covadonga's conquering site
Cradle was of Spanish might,"

so says the old ballad. And what and where was Covadonga? At the far western extremity of the Pyrenees, where the Sierra Penamerella thrusts its rugged spur into the Atlantic, was a great mountain cavern, Covadonga, large enough to shelter as many as three hundred men, and there had gathered together the strongest of the Christian bands after the Moorish victory in the south. A long, sinuous valley or ravine, named Cangas, that is to say, the "shell," sloped down to the foothills from the mouth of the cave and seemed to present an easy approach to the stronghold. Pelayo, of the royal line of the Goths, had here been proclaimed a king in 718, and here was the beginning of that kingdom of Asturias and Leon which was later to become a mighty one in Spain. The Moors soon tried to crush this growing power, which was a menace to their own security. They sent an army under a chief named Al Kama, who was to win over the recalcitrants by the offer of fair terms, if possible; and if not, he was to storm their rude citadel and destroy them utterly.

The proposal for a shameful peace was indignantly refused, and the Moors, confident of victory, and outnumbering the Christian warriors many times, swept up the broad slope of the long and winding valley to the cavern's mouth. The summits of the rocky walls on either side were filled with people, many of them women, who were waiting for the signal from Pelayo and his brave handful of followers. When the foreguard of the Moors was near the entrance to the cave, the king and his men, mounted, led the attack in front, and all along the line the carnage began. Now let the Spanish ballad speak again:

> "'In the name
> Of God! For Spain or vengeance!' And forthwith
> On either side along the whole defile,
> The Asturians shouting: 'In the name of God!'
> Set the whole ruin loose: huge trunks, and stones,
> And loosened crags, down, down they rolled with rush
> And bound and thundering force."

The mountain torrent which had its course along the valley was dyed red with the pagan blood, and so great was the humiliation of the Moors that the Arab chroniclers observe a discreet silence with regard to the details of this defeat. But for the brave and valiant assistance of the Spanish women this defeat might not have been possible.

Another instance of the bravery of the Spanish women, which at this distance seems somewhat tinged with the air of comic opera, is connected with the heroic defence of Orihuela. It was at the time of the Moorish invasion, when the Gothic leaders, after their pitiful failure at Guadalete, were seeking cover and scurrying off to places of safety, closely pursued by the ardent sons of the Prophet. Duke Theodomir, hard pressed in the mountains of Murcia, was obliged to ride for his life; and with but few attendants, he finally succeeded in making his

way, after many adventures, to the walled town of Orihuela, with the enemy close upon his heels. To prevent an immediate attack, gain time, and circumvent the Moors in as many ways as possible, Theodomir had to think quickly. The town was practically without a garrison when he entered it, and his followers were too few in numbers to avail him much. Then it was that the women of the town came to his assistance, offering to do what he might command for the common safety. Theodomir clothed them in armor at once, gave them spears and swords, ordered them to tie their hair under their chins, that they might look like bearded men, and then stationed his amazon warriors upon the walls and fortifications, where they made such a brave parade that the Moors were afraid to attack the city, and offered to parley with the Spaniards. Seizing upon this favorable opportunity, Theodomir, disguised as a legate, and preceded by his page, who played the part of a royal herald, boldly entered the hostile camp, made his way to the tent of Abdul Aziz, the leader, and there, by his consummate acting, succeeded in obtaining the province of Murcia, together with seven cities which he was to hold under the kalif, on condition of a yearly tribute. Such was the defence of Orihuela, and while it involved no strenuous fighting, it was at the same time no mediocre test of womanly daring. After the first few trying hours of the masquerade had been passed, however, and it was evident that the ruse had been successful, it may well be imagined that these feminine warriors were not slow to see the humor of the situation, and many must have been the jests as they passed each other upon the battlements, with the Moors, far down below, completely awed by their warlike mien.

Dryden has said: "Women emasculate a monarch's reign;" and more than one instance of the truth of this

statement may be found in the court annals of almost any country. The history of the little monarchies of Spain in that chaotic, formative period, when the Christians were slowly gaining in power and strength and preparing for the great final struggle which was to overcome the turbaned invaders and consolidate the Spanish interests, presents many chapters of exceeding interest wherein women play no unimportant rôle, and the dowager-queen Teresa, mother of King Sancho the Fat, of Leon, stands out as a prominent figure among them all. Endowed with no mean portion of feminine art and cunning, she was the author of a plot which gave inspiration for a whole cycle of ballads. The bravest Christian champion in all Spain in the latter half of the tenth century was Fernan Gonzalez, Count of Castile, a veritable Spanish Warwick, who was held in such high esteem by his countrymen that they inscribed upon his great carved tomb at Burgos: *A Fernan Gonzalez, Libertador de Castilla, el mas excelente General de ese tiempo* [To Fernan Gonzalez, liberator of Castile, the greatest general of his time]. His great success, however, in his forays against the Moors made Doña Teresa fearful lest some harm might befall her sluggish son, King Sancho. For some time Sancho had been on good terms with the Moors. He had even journeyed to Cordova to consult a celebrated physician, and had in many ways been treated with such favor by the kalif, Abd-el-Rhaman, that people had begun to shake their heads and ask themselves whether the ruler of Leon was doing all in his power for the good of Christendom. After the great success of Gonzalez at Pedrahita, where the Saracen invader Abu Alaxi suffered signal defeat, there was greater dissatisfaction than ever with this do-nothing policy, and the Count of Castile was hailed on every hand as the greatest of the Christian warriors. Her jealousy

aroused, Doña Teresa now resolved upon desperate measures, ready to stop at nothing in her mad desire to overthrow Gonzalez. On her advice, the count was summoned to Sancho's capital, Oviedo, for a general conference in regard to matters of Christian defence, and to Oviedo Gonzalez came, little suspecting the trap which had been laid for him there. Doña Teresa knew that Gonzalez had lately lost his wife, and she found opportunity during his stay, after many words of fulsome flattery, in which she was no novice, to counsel him to seek the hand of her niece, Doña Sancha, daughter of King Garcia of Navarre. She even undertook to arrange this marriage for him and promised to send her messengers on ahead, that the Navarrese court might be ready to receive him in case he thought best to go at once to press his suit. Gonzalez, at this moment a living example of Gay's couplet,

> "And when a lady's in the case,
> You know all other things give place,"

all inflamed by the glowing descriptions of Doña Sancha's beauty, and at the same time fully aware of the political advantage which might follow from this alliance with the powerful house of Navarre, was only too eager to go on the moment, as the cunning Doña Teresa had supposed; and he set out at once, leaving Oviedo amidst the sound of martial music, with banners flying, and the populace cheering lustily and in all good faith, for they loved this doughty hero. Doña Teresa had kept her word, in that she had sent on her messengers ahead to announce his coming, but the reception that she was preparing for him was far different from the one which he had imagined. King Garcia was informed by his crafty sister that Gonzalez was coming with an impudent demand for his daughter's hand, and that for the general safety he should be

seized and put into one of the castle dungeons as soon as he appeared. Doña Sancha, the prospective bride of his ardent imagination, was no party to all this, for the rumors of Gonzalez's visit which had come to her ears had filled her with excitement, and she looked forward to his coming with no little fluttering of heart. King Garcia, however, was faithful to his sister's command, and the poor Count Gonzalez, taken unawares, was promptly cast into prison on his arrival. What Doña Sancha did on learning the unworthy rôle she had been made to play in this sad event is well told in the ballad which recounts the story, and here, as will be seen, a Norman knight is made to act as her informant. The verses are in Lockhart's admirable translation:

"The Norman feasts among the guests, but at the evening tide
He speaks to Garci's daughter within her bower aside:
'Now God forgive us, lady, and God His Mother dear,
For on a day of sorrow we have been blithe of cheer.

"'The Moors may well be joyful, but great should be our grief,
For Spain has lost her guardian, Castile hath lost her chief;
The Moorish host is pouring like a river o'er the land;
Curse on the Christian fetters that bind Gonçales's hand.

"'Gonçales loves thee, lady, he loved thee long ago,
But little is the kindness that for his love you show;
The curse that lies on Cava's head, it may be shared by thee.
Arise! let love with love be paid, and set Gonçales free.'

"The lady answered little, but at the midst of night,
When all her maids are sleeping, she hath risen and ta'en her flight;
She hath tempted the alcayde with her jewels and her gold,
And unto her his prisoner, that jailer false hath sold.

"She took Gonçales by the hand at the dawning of the day,
She said 'Upon the heath you stand, before you lies the way,
But if I to my father go—alas! what must I do!
My father will be angry—I fain would go with you.'"

It is perhaps needless to add that the fair Doña Sancha did go with the gallant captain, and in the lofty cathedral

at Burgos, which was his capital, their wedding was celebrated in great state. At the conclusion of the marriage feast, however, Gonzalez determined to punish the faithless Garcia, and made war against him to such good effect that he was made a prisoner and only released after the repeated intercessions of his sister, Doña Teresa. Why Gonzalez should have listened to the pleadings of Teresa after her treatment of him is rather hard to imagine. A still further proof of his unsuspicious character is seen in the fact that he allowed himself to be inveigled into going to Leon to attend a meeting of the Cortes, and while there he was again imprisoned. Such was the sum of Doña Teresa's iniquity, and all because she was in the clutch of the green-eyed monster and put a higher value upon the glory of her house than upon the glory of the Christian arms. This was the occasion for the good wife Doña Sancha to show her courage and loyalty, which stand out in striking contrast to the treacherous acts of her jealous aunt. It was Shakespeare who said: "These women are shrewd tempters with their tongues;" and as the alcayde had been won over at the time of Gonzalez's first captivity, so now again Doña Sancha put her nimble wits to work and devised another plan for his release. In robe of sombre hue, she set out upon a pious pilgrimage to Santiago; and as her way lay through Leon, where her husband languished in prison, she resolved to tarry by the way for a short while and visit him in his misery. Permission for such a visit was slow in coming, as Doña Teresa was resolved this time that Gonzalez should not escape. After much pleading, however, Doña Sancha had her way, and the prison doors swung open before her. Once alone with her husband, she quickly changed clothes with him; and the Count of Castile, in the garb of a woman, soon after passed the jailers and found himself at liberty. By

the time the ruse was discovered, he was leagues away and in safety among his friends. The wrath of Teresa and her son King Sancho may well be imagined when the news was brought to them; but they resolved to take the matter in a philosophic way, after the first moment of anger had passed, and Doña Sancha was allowed to join her husband, going unharmed from this unfriendly court.

In all this warring, romantic period of the tenth century, by far the most interesting and thrilling tale is that of Doña Lambra and the Seven Lords of Lara, and while the story is somewhat legendary and based rather upon stirring ballads than upon authentic records, it must not be forgotten here. Doña Lambra, a kinswoman of the Count of Castile, had been married with great ceremony at Burgos to Ruy Velasquez, brother-in-law to Don Gonzalo, Count of Lara in the Asturias; and during the five weeks of pleasure and feasting which celebrated this happy event, there were no knights in all the glittering throng more striking in appearance and more admired for their many accomplishments than the seven stalwart sons of Don Gonzalo, the nephews of the bridegroom, who were called the Seven Lords of Lara. During the very last week of the festivities a wooden target was set up upon the other side of the river, and the knights threw light Moorish *djerrids,* or wooden javelins, at it, each trying with a surer aim to outdo his fellows. Doña Lambra was an interested spectator, and when at last Alvaro Sanchez, one of her favorite cousins, struck the target full in the centre, she was more than pleased, and declared that he was the best marksman of them all. The Seven Lords of Lara had taken no part in this contest as yet, for six of the brothers had been busily engaged in playing chess, and the youngest of them all, Gonzalo Gonzales, had been standing idly by. Piqued, however, by Doña Lambra's praise of her

kinsman, young Gonzalo threw himself upon his horse, rode to the river's edge, and hurled his *djerrid* with such force that he completely shattered the target far on the other side. This unexpected turn of events so angered the bride that she grew white with rage, and Alvaro vented his spleen in such abusive language that Gonzalo dealt him a blow which struck him fairly upon the mouth and knocked out his teeth. Thereat Doña Lambra cried out that no maiden had ever been so dishonored at her wedding, and bloodshed was narrowly averted by the interference of the Counts of Castile and Lara. As it was feared that Ruy Velasquez might be urged on to vengeance by his angered wife, he was induced to set out upon a trip through Castile with many of the older knights, while the Seven Lords of Lara, in the midst of a larger company, were left to escort the bride to her new home at Bavardiello. Once arrived, the brothers went into the garden of the palace, where Gonzalo, who was a devotee of falconry, was engaged in bathing his favorite hawk, when suddenly, without warning, one of Doña Lambra's slaves rushed upon him and threw in his face a gourd filled with blood. In mediæval Spain this was a most deadly insult, and all the brothers drew their swords and rushed after the offender. They came upon him crouching at Doña Lambra's feet, and there they killed him without mercy, so that his blood was sprinkled upon her garments. Then, taking their mother with them, they returned to their home at Salas. This time Doña Lambra demanded vengeance in no uncertain tone, and Ruy Velasquez began to plot in her behalf. The old Count of Lara was prevailed upon to go to the kalif at Cordova, bearing a letter from Velasquez which was supposedly of political import, but which was intended to be the count's death warrant. The kalif, loath to put so brave a knight to death, cast him into

prison. Soon after, he made an attack upon the Christians. Velasquez gathered an army to oppose him, and succeeded in getting the young Lords of Lara to join him. In the midst of the battle, Velasquez and his whole army deserted, leaving the seven youths and a small company of retainers to fight alone against the Moorish host. Taken prisoners, their heads were cut off and sent to Cordova, where the kalif was cruel enough to present them to their imprisoned father for identification. Now let the ballad take up the story:

"He took their heads up one by one, he kissed them o'er and o'er;
And aye ye saw the tears run down, I wot that grief was sore.
He closed the lids on their dead eyes, all with his fingers frail,
And handled all their bloody curls, and kissed their lips so pale.

"'Oh had ye died all by my side upon some famous day,
My fair young men, no weak tears then had washed your blood away;
The trumpet of Castile had drowned the misbelievers' horn,
And the last of all the Lara's line a Gothic spear had borne.'

"With that it chanced a man drew near to lead him from the place,
Old Lara stooped him down once more, and kissed Gonzalo's face;
But ere the man observed him, or could his gesture bar,
Sudden he from his side had grasped that Moslem's scymetar."

Before the count was overpowered he had killed thirteen of the Moors, and then he begged that he might be put to death; but the kalif, on learning all of the details of the treachery of Velasquez, restored the count to liberty and sent him back to his wife in the castle at Salas. The fate of the revengeful Doña Lambra is not recorded, but it is to be hoped that she was made to atone in some way for all her savage rage.

About Ximena and her far-famed husband Don Rodrigo, widely known as the Cid, many marvellous tales have been told, and it is a matter for regret that so many of them are purely legendary. According to one of the

traditions, which was followed by the French dramatic poet Pierre Corneille when he wrote his famous play, *Le Cid,* in 1636, Ximena is given a much more prominent place in the story than that accorded to her in history. According to this version, Don Diego, father of Don Rodrigo, is given a mortal insult by the braggart Don Gomez, who is the father of Ximena. Young Don Rodrigo, eager to avenge the slight put upon his aged father, provokes Don Gomez to a duel and kills him. Ximena, who has loved Don Rodrigo, overcome by these tragic events, is at a loss to know what to do, and in her heart there is a fierce struggle between her love for her lover and her respect for her father. This distressing situation is relieved somewhat by the thought that Don Rodrigo, in killing her father, has but avenged his own; but still her Spanish nature cries for redress, and she appeals to King Fernan of Castile, at whose court all these things have taken place. Believing her love for Don Rodrigo to be stronger than her hatred, the king suddenly announces the death of Rodrigo, which so surprises Ximena that she discloses her deep affection, which she had made an attempt to conceal; whereat he announces his intention to unite the two lovers as soon as Rodrigo should have given further proof of his valor.

As a matter of fact, the Cid was a free-lance of undoubted bravery and courage, who fought now with and now against the Moors; but in spite of the fact that he was not always true to the same allegiance, he is essentially a popular hero, as he represents a spirit of boldness and independence which in itself is enough to endear him to the minds of the people. His killing of Don Gomez in the manner described is extremely doubtful, and history affords no details as to the manner of his wooing or his wedding. But Ximena was his wife, shared in many of his hardships, and at his death, in 1099, ruled in his stead

for three years at Valencia. Finally, much harried by the Moslems, who were ever growing bolder, Ximena withdrew to Burgos, taking with her the body of the Cid, embalmed in precious spices, and borne, as in the days of his vigor, on the back of his great warhorse Babieca. The Cid was buried in the monastery of Cardena, near Burgos; and there the brave Doña Ximena was laid by his side at the time of her death, in 1104. Although a number of fanciful stories have been told about the daughters of Ximena and the doughty Cid, the fact remains that they had two daughters, who married into some of the noblest houses of all Spain. The elder, Christina, became the wife of Ramiro, Infante of Navarre; while the younger, Maria, married Count Ramon Berenguer III. of Barcelona. After a long series of intermarriages, to quote from Burke, in a double stream, through the royal houses of Spain and of France, the blood of the Cid is found to flow in the veins of his majesty Alfonso XIII., the reigning King of Spain.

The religious side of Spanish life in the eleventh century, so far as Christianity is concerned, centres about a woman, Constance of Burgundy, the wife of King Alfonso VI. of Castile. This was the period when the monk Hildebrand, become Pope Gregory VII., was endeavoring to unify the power of the Roman Church and strengthen the authority of the papacy; and as he had a devout woman, the Countess Matilda of Tuscany, to aid him in Italy, so he had as his firm ally in Spain the pious Queen Constance, daughter of King Robert of France. Constance was not a Spanish woman, but the influence she exerted in Spain had such a far-reaching effect that she cannot be overlooked in any category such as the present. With Constance to Spain came the monk Bernard of Cluny, a pale ascetic, who had just been leading a crusade against the corruption existing in the Church itself, and whose whole

life had been devoted to serious things. The French court had been given over to works of piety, the Church had great authority, and the clergy were held in high esteem. When the French princess left this devout atmosphere to go to sunny Spain, she had grave misgivings as to the frivolous and irreverent character of her new subjects, and deemed it wise to take with her as a friend and adviser the stern Bernard. The worst fears of these two zealous Christians were more than realized. The king had friendly intercourse with Moorish vassals, and Moslem and Christian lived side by side in perfect harmony! That all this should be and at a time when the same Moslem brood was defiling the place of the Holy Sepulchre in far-off Palestine, and when the crusading spirit filled the air, was almost beyond belief, and Constance and the monk were greatly scandalized thereat. Totally without that toleration which comes with experience, they could conceive of no religion as a good religion which did not meet the rigid requirements of their own belief; and they planned at once a Spanish crusade which was intended to improve the general deplorable condition of public morals and at the same time to modify, in a most radical way, the liturgy of the Spanish Church, which was far too lax in points of discipline. Their conduct at the time of the surrender of Toledo, in 1074, is a most excellent example of the eager, yet thoughtless, way in which they went about their new work. When King Alfonso, after an interval of more than three hundred years, regained possession of the ancient capital of the Goths, the city from which the luckless Rodrigo, the last of the Goths, was driven, Toledo was surrendered on the express condition that the Moors should not be disturbed in their religious beliefs and that they were to retain the use of their mosques. Such terms with such an enemy appeared monstrous to the

queen. Especially did it seem a sin before God that the principal mosque, the Alfaqui, the noblest building in all that fair city which lay stretched out with many a gilded dome and minaret upon its seven hills above the Tagus, should still be used for the worship of a pagan people; and Constance and Bernard plotted together, piously, for the triumph of the true religion. The first time that the king left the city, Bernard, now Archbishop of Toledo, acting under the authority of Queen Constance, went to the Alfaqui at the head of a company of monks summoned from his monastery at Sahagun, opened the doors, set up crosses, erected altars, hung bells, and then publicly summoned the people to mass on the following morning. The king, upon his return, was furious at this intolerant act, and was moved to threaten punishment; but the Moors, satisfied by his indignation, displayed a real spirit of toleration in asking for the pardon of the monks.

The queen and Bernard, successful in this first struggle, continued to labor incessantly for the glory of the Church. The masterful Pope Gregory VII., in his letter addressed to the princes of Spain, said: "You are aware, I believe, that from the earliest times the kingdom of Spain was the special patrimony of Saint Peter, and although pagans have occupied it, it still belongs to the same master." The King of Castile was not bold enough to deny this papal claim of overlordship, and Gregory demanded as first proof of his submission that he should substitute throughout his realm the Roman liturgy for the national or Mozarabic ritual then in general use. Queen Constance and Bernard were in favor of this reform, and they prevailed upon the king to accept it; but it was a far different matter to secure its actual use at the hands of the national clergy, who were strongly opposed to the change. In spite of all her efforts the queen could do nothing, and finally, as a

compromise, it was decided to submit the question to the ordeal of trial by battle. Two champions were duly appointed who fought before a most august assembly over which the queen presided. The Knight of the Gothic Missal, Don Juan Ruiz de Matanzas, killed the Champion of Rome, and was not only victorious, but unscathed, much to the disgust of Constance and her followers. The manifest disinclination to accept this result as final made another ordeal necessary, and this time, in truly Spanish style, a bull fight was resolved upon. The great arena at Toledo was selected as the place where this ecclesiastical combat was to take place, and on the appointed day the great amphitheatre was crowded with an expectant multitude. The queen, the king, and the archbishop, backed by black-robed monks, looked on with evident interest, hoping that this time the scales would turn in their favor; but the people, expert in contests of this kind, had already picked the Castilian bull as the winner and had begun to wager their small coin as to the probable duration of the fight. The people were right, the Roman *toro* was promptly slain, and once more the cause of Spain was triumphant. But the queen was persistent, and in spite of the fact that the result of each of these ordeals was popularly considered as a direct sign from heaven, she refused to accept them as final, because her pet project had been rejected. If the results had been different, there is little doubt but that the ordeals would have been received as infallible. However, it was not possible to cast a slight upon this time-honored procedure by any act which might tend to throw it into disrepute, so the whole question was dropped for the space of seven years. Queen Constance, in this interval, carried on a quiet campaign which she hoped would lead eventually to the adoption of the much discussed and twice rejected liturgy, and at no time did she

give up her hope. Rome, to her narrow mind, must reign supreme in matters spiritual if the kingdom of Spain was to have relations with the kingdom of heaven, and she did not hesitate to ride rough-shod over the national clergy, to whom alone, without any aid whatever from the pope, the recent Christian successes in Spain had been due. When she considered the time ripe for some radical action, Gregory sent his legate, the Cardinal Ricardo, to hold a Church council at Burgos, and there it was formally decreed that the Mozarabic ritual must be put aside in Castile. Before the formal adoption of the Roman form, however, it was decided wise to resort once more to a trial by ordeal, as the favorable issue of such a public test would make it much easier to conquer the prejudices of the people. This time, Constance advising it, the ordeal by fire was tried, and, as Miss Yonge phrases it, "a great pile was erected in the market place of Toledo for the most harmless *auto de fé* that ever took place there." Seats were built up on all sides in amphitheatre fashion, the queen, the king, the court, and the dignitaries of the two clerical parties were there in special boxes, and again were the people much in evidence, but this time much in doubt as to the final outcome. When all was ready, the torch was applied to the pile and the two volumes were committed to the flames. The book which was not consumed by the fire was to be considered acceptable to God. To the chagrin of the papal party, the Roman book was utterly consumed, but the Gothic missal came forth unscathed. Although there was great rejoicing at this final triumph for the national clergy, the foreigners were in control, and the king, urged on by his wife, decided to act upon his own responsibility, without regard for the manifest judgment of heaven, and lost no time in giving his signature to the decree of the Council of Burgos, which then went into immediate effect. This

time the people made no resistance, and, as has been said, Spain became once more, after the lapse of nearly seven centuries, the obedient province of Rome. In the succeeding centuries the influence of Rome has been ever present and powerful in the affairs of the Spanish peninsula, and whether for its weal or woe, which is not a matter for consideration here, the fact remains that Queen Constance was the one person in Spain who was most responsible for this state of affairs. Her unflagging interest in the success of the papal party and her perseverance in the face of the opposition of a majority of the Spanish clergy made her the life of the whole movement, and to this day she is held in grateful memory at the Holy See.

Chapter XV

Women in Early Political Life

XV

WOMEN IN EARLY POLITICAL LIFE

AFTER the time of the good Queen Constance and with the growth of the Spanish monarchies, which in spite of all their internal turmoil and confusion were fast becoming more powerful and more of a menace to the Moslem rule, the wheels of fate seem to bring women into greater political prominence than ever before. Constance, it is true, had been no mean figure in that epoch, and had exerted a most powerful influence in shaping the destinies of Spain for her own time and for the future, but this was done by an exercise of indirect rather than direct authority. Constance had been queen, but there had been a king to rule as well, and with him remained the real power. As Constance influenced him, she may have been said to use this royal power, it is true, but the fact remains that it was the woman Constance who was using her powers of feminine persuasion to bring about the results which were so dear to her heart. No political responsibilities rested upon her shoulders, there were no cares of state to weary and make uneasy her crowned head, and she was free to follow her own penchants unimpeded by this larger task. But now a wider field for the activities of women seems to come; in Spain, chance gives them full control in their own name in certain instances, and they bear the full responsibility.

The measure of their success may not be greater than the measure of their failure in these new lines of endeavor, but, good or bad as their methods of administration may have been, it does not appear that they fall below the level of masculine achievement at the same time. And this is a curious thing. Since the birth of time men have been regarding women as weaklings, both mentally and physically. Tennyson has it that "woman is the lesser man," and such has been the commonly expressed opinion. Everything in the social life of the world has conspired to give truth to this statement: women are still the real slaves of their husbands in many countries, and the virtual slaves in almost all the world; education has been granted to them grudgingly, the scope of their intellect has been limited in the narrowest way; and in spite of all these facts, in spite of this suppression and repression from time immemorial, women have been able by some power or some cunning to exert a most powerful influence in the world, and when called upon to take up a man's work they have left a record for judgment and skill and wisdom which needs no apologies and which is generally above the average. To those who are content with generalities it may be sufficient to say that women are not the equals of men, but to anyone who attempts to study, step by step, the history of human development it becomes apparent that the French admonition *Cherchez la femme* contains the truth, unalloyed. In America it has become the custom to say that in every great national emergency there is always a man ready to meet the situation and meet it nobly and with understanding; and what can be said here can be said with equal truth perhaps in other countries of the world, but to this statement it may be well to add that women also may be found to do nobly the tasks which may fall to their lot.

In every day and generation, however, it will rarely be found that the women are better than the men. The interests of men and women are so identical from so many points of view, society is in so many ways but a composite of their common interests, that their moral level must of necessity be the same. By intuition, then, by inherent capacity, by woman's wit, by that something feminine which is at once the power and the charm of a woman, the members of this so-called weaker sex have been able to take their place worthily beside their brothers in the open field of the world's activities whenever circumstance has called them forth, without the inheritance, the education, or the experience which the men possess, but morally they can but be as society makes them. There are exceptions to all rules, however; some women as well as some men may be better or worse than the majority of their fellows, and these are the ones who are signalled out by the historian for special attention. The people who are always good and always happy have no history, as there is nothing noteworthy to tell of them, life has no tragedies, all is plain sailing, and the whole story can be told in a few words. In a measure the same thing is true of the ordinary man, be he good or bad, for what can be said of him can be said of a whole class, and so the history of the class may be told, but the individual will always remain in the background.

In the special epoch of Spanish history with which the present chapter is concerned, the twelfth century and the first part of the thirteenth, there is little to say of women in general which cannot be said of the mediæval women of other parts of Europe. Oriental ideas had been introduced to some extent, it is true, by the Moors, but otherwise the general ignorance and dependence of the women of the time call for no special comment. Above this

commonplace level there are to be seen, nevertheless, two women who occupied a commanding position in the world, which was quite unusual. They were both queens of Castile, and as one was bad, vain, reckless, and frivolous, so was the other good, unselfish, wise, and dignified. Within the extremes of character which their lives present is traced the measure of a woman's possibilities at that time.

Urraca of Castile, daughter of Constance and King Alfonso VII., inherited little of her mother's devout nature; the world rather than the Church had attracted her, and she began to show at an early age a taste for gallantry and intrigue which became but more pronounced with her maturer years. She was dark rather than fair, with an imperious bearing, she had compelling eyes, and there was a grace in her movements which it was difficult to see without admiring, but she was vain, intent upon conquest, and without an atom of moral firmness, if all accounts be true. Her mother was sorely tried by her waywardness, but did not live long enough to appreciate her real lack of moral instinct; and her father, in spite of his several marriages, which were almost as numerous as those of Henry VIII. of England, was chagrined to find Urraca as his sole heir, no other children having survived. In the hope that France might again furnish material for a dignified alliance as it had done before in sending Constance herself, Alfonso arranged for the marriage of Urraca with Raymond of Burgundy. Urraca was soon left a widow, with one son, Alfonso; and while she apparently felt some affection for this child, she was in no way weaned from her love of excitement, and was soon again the soul and centre of the court's gay revels. One among the throng of courtiers attracted her, the tall Count Gomez of Candespina, and she made no secret of her love for him. As

often seen together, they formed a striking pair, and it was not strange that the Castilian nobles should have wished to see them married, in spite of the fact that the prospective bridegroom was not her equal by birth. No one dared to give Alfonso this advice, however, as his refusal was a foregone conclusion, all things being taken into consideration. Finally, the Jewish physician of the court, Don Cidelio, allowing his interest in the affair to get the better of his discretion, ventured to speak to the king about Urraca and her lover. Alfonso, indignant, was so displeased, that Don Cidelio was banished from the court at once, while he arranged forthwith a political marriage which was full of possibilities for Spain's future welfare. Alfonso, in his long reign, which had lasted for forty-three years, had given such a great impetus to the movement of reconquest directed against the Moors, that a strong and capable successor could have completed his work and hastened the final Christian victory by some four hundred years. Alfonso was far-seeing enough to know the possibilities ahead, and it is easy to understand and sympathize with his rage at the mere thought of the dapper, silken Candespina. So the rebellious Urraca, with her heart full of love for Count Gomez, was married, and just before her father's death in 1109, to King Alfonso I., called *el batallador* [the battler], and known as the Emperor of Aragon. This union of Castile, Leon, and Aragon would have promised much for the future, if the rulers of this united kingdom could have lived in peace and harmony together. They were so unlike in every way, however, that it was easy to predict trouble. The Battler was a youth of great military skill and great ambition, but he was not a courtier in any sense of the word and could not be compared in Urraca's eyes with her carpet knight, Don Gomez. So she was loath to change her

mode of life, and he was in a state of constant irritation at her worldliness; and as a natural consequence of it all, after a year of turmoil and confusion, the two separated.

Content to lose his wife, Alfonso was quite unwilling to lose her broad domain, and consequently Aragonese garrisons were installed in some of the principal Castilian fortresses, while Urraca, a prisoner, was confined in the fortress of Castelar. This was too much for the Castilians to endure; so they at once took up arms in their queen's defence and, furthermore, demanded a divorce on the ground that Urraca and Alfonso were within the proscribed limits of consanguinity, as they were both descended from Sancho the Great, of Navarre. While there was much in the queen's character which the Castilian people could not admire, they had never approved of her marriage with the *batallador,* and were only too happy to have this excuse for severing the ties which bound the two countries together. Urraca was rescued from her captivity, and proceeded without delay to annoy her husband in every manner possible. Her honored father's prime minister was deposed and his estates confiscated, Don Gomez was given this high post and treated as an acknowledged favorite, and most shamelessly, and the whole country was shocked. But matters of self-defence were now of first importance to the Castilians, and so they were compelled to overlook her misconduct for the moment and prepare to withstand the irate Alfonso's threatened invasion. He invited Henry, Count of Portugal, the brother of Urraca's first husband,—and her son's guardian,—to aid him in this attack, and together they invaded Castile and inflicted a complete defeat upon Urraca's army at the battle of Sepulveda in the year 1111. The pope, Pascal II., sent a legate, who granted the divorce for which the Castilians had clamored; and Urraca, again a free woman, was now

the centre of her own little court, where she soon gathered about her a small company of nobles who were vying with each other to obtain her royal favor. Two among them, Count Gomez of Candespina, and Pedro, a member of the great and powerful Lara family, hoped to marry her, but she coquetted with them all to such good purpose that she succeeded in keeping their good will by leaving them all in uncertainty as to her serious intentions.

At this moment a new element appeared in the settlement of public affairs. For the first time in the history of Spain, the privileged towns and cities, which had been granted special charters by the late Alfonso, Urraca's father, rose in their might and declared that Urraca should be deposed and that her youthful son, Alfonso Ramon, should be crowned in her stead. Seeing this turn of affairs, Henry of Portugal, the young Alfonso's guardian, decided that he might best serve his own interests by siding with the Castilians against the Battler, and he lost no time in making this transfer of his allegiance. Castile and Leon were still harried by the divorced husband, who now had no legal claim upon them, and there was a general consolidation of national interests for the national defence, while the conflicting interests with regard to the succession within the country were at the same time pressing for settlement and producing a state of strife and contention which was little short of civil war. In the midst of it all, Urraca continued to play the wanton, and soon so disgusted the Count of Portugal that he deserted her standard. This he did on the eve of the great battle of Espina, in the year 1112. Urraca still counted upon the devotion of her nobles, but Lara fled from the field, the prime favorite Candespina was killed, and the revengeful husband gained another victory. It was soon evident, however, that Alfonso of Aragon could never meet with

complete success in his attempt to subdue Castile, and he wisely gave up the struggle after a few more years of desultory fighting. Urraca was now in a tight place, and in spite of all her arts and wiles she was unable to gather about her again a party strong enough to command respect. Candespina and Lara were no longer by her side, the other nobles had lost patience with her constant intriguing, and the popular party, backed by the towns, soon gained the ascendency, and Urraca was compelled to resign in favor of her son. From this moment she sinks into obscurity, and little more is known of her unhappy and profligate career besides the fact that she came to her end, unregretted, in 1126. According to the ancient *Laws of Manu,* "it is in the nature of the feminine sex to seek here below, to corrupt men," and Menander has said, sententiously, "where women are, are all kinds of mischief." While no one at the present time, unless he be some confirmed woman-hater, will be so ungallant as to attempt to maintain the truth of these sweeping statements, there must have been, at various times and places in the world, women of the kind indicated, as Queen Urraca of Castile, for example, or these things would never have been said.

The great-grandson of Urraca, Alfonso III. of Castile, received as his heritage the usual complement of strife and warfare which belonged to almost all of the little Spanish monarchies throughout the greater part of the twelfth century; but in the year 1170, arriving at his majority, he entered into a friendly treaty of peace with Aragon, and in that same fortunate year he married the Princess Eleanor, daughter of the English king, Heny II. Apropos of this marriage and its general effect upon the fortunes of Castile, Burke has written the following interesting sentences: "Up to the time of this happy union, the reign

of Alfonso III. in Spain had been nothing but a succession of intrigues and civil wars of the accustomed character; but from the day of his marriage in 1170 to the day of his death in 1214, after a reign of no less than fifty-six years, he exercised the sovereign power without hindrance, if not entirely without opposition, within his dominions. If the domestic tranquillity of Castile during four-and-forty years may not be attributed exclusively to the influence of the English queen, yet the marriage bore fruits in a second generation, of which it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance; for it was the blood of the Plantagenets, that flowed in the veins of Berenguela, their daughter, one of the true heroines of Spain."

In this instance, as in the case of the good Constance of Burgundy, we see that Spain has been sobered and steadied by an infusion of foreign blood. Constance, it is true, was a fanatic who cared little for the national desires, and thought little of adapting herself to the national conditions of life, so long as she could further her own ends, which were those of the pope at Rome; and so stern and strict was her view of life, and so rigid was her discipline, that it was impossible for her to reconcile the lighter-minded Spaniards to her mode of thinking. For a short time, by drastic methods, she subdued to some extent the frivolous temper of her people; but she was so unlovable in her ways, and so unloved by the people at large, that the sum total of her influence upon Spanish life, apart from the somewhat questionable advantage which she gave to Rome as the result of her activity, amounted to very little. Even her own daughter, Urraca, in spite of the fact that she undoubtedly inherited more from her father than she did from her mother, was, beyond peradventure, rendered more wayward and more reckless by the mother's narrow view of life. The gracious Eleanor, on the other hand,

was more liberal-minded, did everything in her power to get into touch with her subjects, and by her kindliness and strength of character was able to aid her husband in no mean degree in quieting civil discord and in consolidating the interests of the country.

Her daughter Berenguela, brought up in the midst of these influences, developed a strong and self-reliant character which early in her career gave proof of its existence. In accord with that policy which has so often obtained in the monarchies of Europe, it was decided that a foreign alliance with some strong ruling house would redound to advantage; and so great was the prestige of Castile at this time, that Alfonso found no difficulty in arranging a marriage with Conrad, Count of Suabia, the son of the great Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. As might have been expected, this marriage was nothing but a political arrangement which was to benefit Castile, and in which the will of Berenguela, the person most interested, had not been consulted in any manner whatever. It is not on record that Eleanor was opposed to this arrangement for her daughter, not from any lack of independent spirit,—for she came of a self-willed race, as the erratic life of her brother, Richard Cœur de Lion, will show,—but because such marriages were the common lot of the royal maidens of her time and were accepted as matters of necessity. It must be remembered that the ideals of marriage were yet much undeveloped and that "husband" and "lover" were rarely, if ever, synonymous terms. It appears that the emperor not only consented to this marriage between his son and Eleanor's daughter, but was much in favor of the project and more than anxious to see the consummation of it all, as Eleanor had brought Gascony to her husband as a marriage portion, and the prospective inheritance of Berenguela was a goodly one.

Fortunately for Berenguela, the marriage was postponed until she had attained her majority; and when that day of partial freedom came, she boldly declared that she would not marry the German prince, that she did not know him and did not love him, and that nothing could force her to such a bargain of herself. Great was the consternation in her father's court, and great was the dismay in the North when Frederick Barbarossa was told of this haughty Spanish maiden who refused the honor of an alliance with his imperial house. The case was well-nigh unique; the mediæval world was startled in its traditional routine, and Berenguela's audacity became the talk of every court in Europe. Prayers and entreaties were in vain, so firmly did she stand her ground in spite of the countless specious arguments which were used to bend her will, and, finally, the matter was dropped and considered a closed incident. "Woman sees deep; man sees far. To the man the world is his heart; to the woman the heart is her world;" so says Christian Grabbe, and this epigram may well be applied to Berenguela's case. Her heart was her world, and she fought for it, and in her victory she won, not only for herself, but for Spain as well. And it came about in this way. Berenguela was married, and with her own consent, to Alfonso IX., King of Leon, who had of late made war upon her father, and with this marriage and the peace which followed between the two countries, Spain prospered for a time.

This Alfonso of Leon had already made one marriage venture which had come to grief, for he had previously wedded the Princess Teresa of Portugal, and his marriage had been forcibly dissolved by Pope Innocent III., who was then, as Hume puts it, "riding rough-shod over the nations of Christendom." This divorce had been pronounced on the ground that the young couple were too

closely related to each other; and as they ventured to resist, they were for a time excommunicated. So Alfonso and Teresa were finally separated, though not until several children had been born to them, and then the young king led Berenguela to the altar. This marriage, in its immediate result, was but a repetition of what had gone before. The pope annulled it promptly on the same grounds of consanguinity, and turned a deaf ear to every plea for reconsideration. The case was not an unusual one; many marriages which were far less regular in form had been sanctioned by this new Roman Cæsar; and the result of the marriage could be but for the benefit of Rome, as domestic peace in Spain gave assurance of more successful opposition to the Moslem rule. But the pope was firm, his holy permission had not been obtained before the marriage had been celebrated, and, piqued at this unintended slight which had been put upon his august authority, he revealed his littleness by this show of spite.

Rebellious under this harsh decree because of its manifest injustice, Alfonso and Berenguela endeavored to hold out against the pontiff, and for seven years they lived together as man and wife, making their home in Leon. Their life was to some degree a happy one together, children were born to them, but ever about their path was the shadow of doubt that was cast by the pope's decree. As a sad and pitiful end to it all, Berenguela, a mother though not a wife, was forced to return to her father's court in Castile, leaving the eldest son, Fernando, with the father. In but one thing had the pope shown any mercy for this wedded pair, and that was when he had consented to recognize the legitimacy of their children; so Fernando could now be considered, without any doubt, as the rightful heir to Leon. Meanwhile, Alfonso III. of Castile, Berenguela's father, had won new laurels at the great

battle known as the Navas de Tolosa, where the Moors had suffered a crushing defeat, and Castile was more than ever the leading Spanish power. But soon after Berenguela's arrival, her father went to his long rest, and the crown descended to his oldest son, Enrico, who was but a boy of ten. Queen Eleanor was first intrusted with the administration of affairs, but she soon followed her husband, dying within a month after this power had been conferred upon her, and the regency passed by common consent to the prudent care of Berenguela, who was, according to Hume, "the fittest ruler in all Spain, the most prudent princess in all Christendom." This regency, however, was not a time of peace and quiet, for the death of the old king had given opportunity for the turbulent Lords of Lara to break forth again in open revolt, and after a year of ineffectual resistance Berenguela was compelled, in the interests of domestic harmony, to surrender the person of her young brother into the control of Alvaro Nuñez, the leader of the opposition, who at once began to rule the kingdom with a heavy hand. What Berenguela's fate would have been and what Castile's if this usurper had been allowed to remain for a long time in power is a matter for conjecture, but Alvaro's dreams of success were soon shattered. Through some whim of fate it happened that the young king was accidentally killed one morning as he was at play in the courtyard of the palace, and Berenguela, as the only lawful heir, became the Queen of Castile in her own right. In this trying moment, clear-headed as usual, she gave further proof of her astuteness. She realized that her husband might in some way try to make political capital out of the situation and might try to work in his own interests rather than in those of their son. For the young Fernando, recognized as heir to Leon, would now, as the prospective ruler of Castile, be heir to

a larger estate than that of his father, and Alfonso was not a man big enough to rejoice in this fact, as Berenguela well knew. Accordingly, she sent speedy messengers to Alfonso before the news of the death of the young King Enrico had reached him, and asked that her son might come to her for a visit. The invitation was innocent enough, to all appearances, and the request was granted, but no sooner was the young prince safe within the boundaries of Castile than Berenguela called a meeting of the States-General of her kingdom, and there, after having received the homage of her nobles, in the midst of a most brilliant gathering, she announced her intention of abdicating in favor of her son, the heir to Leon. There was some objection to this move, as Berenguela was so universally beloved that all were loath to lose her from the sovereign's chair. She took great pains to point out to them the advantage which would undoubtedly accrue to the country as the result of this prospective union with Leon, assured them that her interests would ever be theirs, and that she would at all times counsel her son and help him in every way within her power; and finally, her will prevailed and the abdication was approved.

Alfonso of Leon was more than irate when he learned of young Enrico's death and realized the meaning of his son's visit to Castile, and he immediately collected a large army and declared war upon his son. Berenguela had foreseen this as the probable result of her course of action and was not entirely unprepared in the emergency. The ultimate peace and prosperity which might come to Spain with the definite union of Castile and Leon were matters of such importance in her eyes that she did not now hesitate to give of her personal wealth, even her jewels, as Isabella did in a later day, to further the interests of the cause for which she was contending. The goodness and

sweetness of character possessed by this great queen made such an impression upon all those who came within the circle of her influence, and her cause was so manifestly just, that her troops were filled with the zeal which knows no defeat, and the conflict was a short one. Through Berenguela's diplomatic action the war was brought to an end, harmony was restored between Castile and Leon, and the united armies of the two countries were sent into southern Spain to make further attack upon the Moorish strongholds.

Now comes an interesting moment in the queen's career, the moment when she was planning with all her wisdom for her son's marriage and his future success. The interminable commotion and discord, the vexatious factional quarrels, and the undying hatreds which had been engendered by a long series of Spanish intermarriages, had so filled her with disgust that she determined, now that the union of Castile and Leon was practically complete, to go outside of this narrow circle in her search for a suitable mate for the young King Fernando. Her choice fell upon the Princess Beatrice of Suabia, cousin of the emperor and member of the same house which she had scorned in her younger days. But the Princess Beatrice was fair and good, the young people were eager for the marriage, and there was no good reason why the thing should not be done. Before this wedding, Berenguela decided that her son must be received into the order of knighthood. There was the customary period of courtly ceremony, with games and gay festivals and much feasting, which lasted for several days, and then came the sacred, final rites, which ended with the accolade. The youthful king and would-be knight was taken, all clothed in white, by two "grave and ancient" chevaliers to the chapel of the monastery of Las Huelgas, near the old city of Burgos, and there, having

placed his arms piously upon the altar, he passed the night alone, "bestowing himself in orisons and prayers." When the daybreak came, he confessed to a priest, heard matins, and then went to rest and prepare himself for the final scene. When he was at length brought back to the chapel, there was a most imposing company awaiting him, composed of all the knights of Castile and many others from far distant countries who had come to wage war against the Moors; and in the presence of them all, from the sanctified hands of his noble mother, came the magic touch which made a man of him. The next day, in the great cathedral at Burgos, the wedding was celebrated, for the German princess had come to Spain for the function, and there was much pomp and much show of silks and brocades and the glitter of gold and silver was backed by the glitter of steel.

Soon King Fernando was in the saddle again, riding away toward the south, leading a great host of knights, and one Moorish town after another fell into their hands. While besieging Jaen, Fernando learned of his father's death, which had occurred suddenly. Berenguela summoned her son to return with all possible speed, but without waiting for his arrival she set out at once for Leon, thinking that there might be work to do. Nor was she wrong. Alfonso of Leon, jealous of his wife's great renown and his son's growing success, and knowing that the union of Castile and Leon was her most cherished project, deliberately left Leon to his two daughters, Sancha and Dulce, children of his first marriage, with Teresa of Portugal, perfectly sure that their claims could not find adequate legal support, as these children had never been legitimized after the pope's annulment of this marriage, but contented at the thought that he had probably left an inheritance of dispute and possible warfare which might be sufficient to make Berenguela's

plans miscarry. But in this he reckoned without his host. Berenguela conducted her affairs with the utmost discretion, conciliated the Leonese nobility, caused her son to be proclaimed king, and brought about a permanent union of the two countries without the loss of a single drop of blood. Having accomplished this task, her next care was to provide in some suitable way for Alfonso's two daughters. This she was under no obligation to do, but her sense of justice left no other course of conduct open to her. She arranged a meeting with their mother Teresa, who had long since retired to a convent, and, journeying to the Portuguese frontier, at Valencia de Alcantara in Galicia, these two women, each the unwedded wife of the same man, came together to settle the claims of their children to their dead husband's throne. The whole matter was discussed in the most friendly way, and Berenguela was able to carry her point that there should be no attempt to unseat Fernando from the throne of Leon, and at the same time she made a proposition, by way of indemnity, which Teresa, speaking for her daughters, was quite ready to accept. The infantas were given by Fernando a pension of fifteen thousand gold doubloons, in return for which they formally agreed to abandon all claim to Leon, and this pension, under Berenguela's direction, was paid in all faith and honor. In November of the year 1246 this great queen died, and, according to her own direction, she was buried at Burgos "in plain and humble fashion."

No better eulogy of her life and labors can ever be written than that which is found in Burke's history of Spain, and no excuse is needed for giving it in its entirety: Berenguela was one of those rare beings who seems to have been born to do right and to have done it. From her earliest youth she was a leading figure, a happy and noble influence in one of the most contemptible and

detestable societies of mediæval Christendom. Married of her own free will to a stranger and an enemy, that she might bring peace to two kingdoms, she was ever a true and loyal wife; unwedded by ecclesiastical tyranny in the very flower of her young womanhood, she was ever a faithful daughter of the Church; inheriting a crown when she had proved her own capacity for royal dominion, she bestowed it on a strange and absent son, with no thought but for the good of her country and of Christendom; and finally, as queen-mother and ever faithful counsellor, she accepted all the difficulties of government, while the glory of royalty was reserved for the king whom she had created. Berenguela was ever present in the right place, and at the proper time, and her name is associated only with what is good and worthy and noble in an age of violence and wrong and robbery; when good faith was well-nigh unknown, when bad men were all-powerful, when murder was but an incident in family life, and treason the chief feature in politics.

Chapter XVI

The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries

XVI

THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

IN the early days of the thirteenth century, Pedro II. of Aragon had married the somewhat frivolous, yet devout, Maria of Montpellier, whose mother had been a Greek princess of Constantinople; and when a son was born of this marriage, Maria, who foresaw a great future for her child, was most desirous that he should have an Apostolic patron. There was the embarrassment of the choice, however, as Maria did not wish to neglect or cast a slight upon eleven saints while giving preference to one, and, finally, the queen's father confessor, Bishop Boyl, devised the following plan. Twelve tapers, each consecrated to an Apostle, were to be lighted, and the child was to be named in honor of the candle which burned the longest. Southey, in somewhat prolix and doggerel verse, has given the following account of the ceremony:

"The tapers were short and slender too,
Yet to the expectant throng,
Before they to the socket burnt,
The time, I trow, seemed long.

"The first that went out was St. Peter,
The second was St. John,
And now St. Mattias is going,
And now St. Mathew is gone.

"Next there went St. Andrew,
Then goes St. Philip too;
And see, there is an end
Of St. Bartholomew.

"St. Simon is in the snuff,
But it is a matter of doubt,
Whether he or St. Thomas could be said,
Soonest to have gone out.

"There are only three remaining,
St. Jude and the two Saints James,
And great was then Queen Mary's hope,
For the best of all good names.

"Great was then Queen Mary's hope,
But greater her fear, I guess,
When one of the three went out,
And that one was St. James the less.

"They are now within less than quarter inch,
The only remaining two,
When there came a thief in St. James,
And it made a gutter too.

"Up started Queen Mary,
Up she sate in her bed,
'I can never call him Judas,'
She clasped her hands and said.

'I never can call him Judas!'
Again did she exclaim.
'Holy Mother, preserve us!
It is not a Christian name.'

"She opened her hands and clasped them again,
And the infant in the cradle
Set up a cry, a lusty cry,
As loud as he was able.

"'Holy Mother, preserve us!'
The Queen her prayer renewed,
When in came a moth at the window,
And fluttered about St. Jude.

"St. James had fallen in the socket,
But as yet the flame is not out,
And St. Jude hath singed the silly moth,
That flutters so idly about.

"And before the flame and the molten wax,
That silly moth could kill,
It hath beat out St. Jude with its wings,
But St. James is burning still.

"Oh, that was a joy for Queen Mary's heart,
The babe is christened James,
The Prince of Aragon hath got,
The best of all good names.

"Glory to Santiago,
The mighty one in war,
James he is called, and he shall be
King James the Conqueror.

"Now shall the Crescent wane,
The Cross be set on high,
In triumph upon many a mosque,
Woe, woe to Mawmetry!"

So Jayme the youth was named, Jayme being the popularly accepted Aragonese form for James, and early in life he entered upon an active career which soon showed him to possess a strong and crafty nature, though he was at the same time brutal, rough, and dissolute. In his various schemes for conquest and national expansion, he stopped at nothing which might ensure the success of his undertakings, and in particular did he attempt by matrimonial ventures of various kinds to increase his already large domain. This rather unusual disregard of the sacredness of the marriage relation, even for that time, may have been induced to some extent by the atmosphere in which he passed his youthful days; for his mother, the devout Queen Maria, in spite of all her pious zeal for the Church, was pleasure-loving, and in the excitement of court life it

was whispered that she had looked with favor more than once upon some gallant troubadour from Provence who had written verses in her honor. Jayme's first marriage was with Eleanor of Castile, Berenguela's sister, but when he discovered that the young Castilian king, Fernando, was strong and capable and that there was no possibility whatever of an ultimate union of Aragon and Castile, at least within his own time, he promptly divorced Eleanor, and then wedded Yolande, the daughter of King Andrew of Hungary. Yolande's eldest son, Pedro, was married to Constance, daughter of King Manfred of Sicily, for purely political reasons; and when the King of France opposed this alliance as one detrimental to the best interests of the pope, who was being much aided at this time by Gallican support, Jayme cleverly silenced this complaint by marrying his daughter Isabel to Philip, the French dauphin. This daring King of Aragon had dreams of a great Romance Empire which might extend all over the southern part of Europe, with Aragon as its centre, and it was to this end that he bent all his energies. While he was not able to realize this fond hope, he was remarkably successful; and not a little of his success must be attributed to his lack of sentiment and his practical view of the matrimonial question.

With his conquests and the corresponding prosperity which is to be seen in Castile at the same general period, Christian Spain slowly became the most civilized and enlightened country in all Europe. Spain was rich, there was much culture and refinement, and her artistic manufactures excited the wonder of the world. With the knights who were coming in ever increasing numbers to do battle against the Moors, now that the time of the Crusades had passed, there came a goodly number of the troubadours and minstrels who had recently been

driven from Provence by the cruel Simon de Montfort at the time of the Albigensian massacres, and the whole condition of Spanish society was such that the stern simplicity of the early Spaniards quickly disappeared. So great was the craze for poetry and for glittering entertainments and a lavish display of wealth, that Don Jayme felt called upon to take some restraining measures. Aragon, as well as Castile, was filled with the wealth of captured Moorish cities, there was a new sense of national security with each successive Christian victory, luxuries of all kinds were being brought within the reach of the people as the result of a newly aroused spirit of commercialism, and, all in all, to a warlike king, the situation was fraught with danger. Accordingly, Jayme determined to take matters into his own hands, and he proceeded to issue a number of sumptuary laws which were far from mild. Food was regulated, minstrels were not allowed to sit at the same table with ladies and gentlemen, most rigid rules were formulated against the abuse of gold, silver, and tinsel trimmings on the dresses of the women, and of the men as well, and the use of ermine and of all fine and costly furs was carefully restricted. In Castile the same movement was taking place, and Alfonso X., who followed Fernando, issued similar laws, wherein women were forbidden to wear any bright colors, to adorn their girdles with pearls, or to border their skirts with either gold or silver thread. As in Italy at about the same time, and notably in Florence, extravagant wedding feasts were condemned, no presents of garments were permitted, and the whole cost of a bride's trousseau could not exceed sixty maravedis, a maravedi being a gold coin containing about sixty grains of the yellow metal.

It was in the midst of this brilliant period of national well-being that Spain was called upon to celebrate a wedding

festival which far surpassed in magnificence anything that had ever before been seen among the Christians of the peninsula. The sister of King Alfonso X. of Castile, Eleanor, was given in marriage to Edward Plantagenet, the attractive young heir to the English throne, and it was in honor of this event that all Burgos was in gala dress in the month of October, 1254. All were on tiptoe with excitement, crowds thronged into the old cathedral city, and the windows and housetops were black with people, on that eventful day when the stalwart prince rode in through the great gate, with a glittering train of nobles at his back, to claim his bride. Prince Edward was a magnificent specimen of physical manhood, towering almost head and shoulders above his fellows, and the gorgeous entertainments which were prepared for him and his followers gave good opportunity for all to witness his courtly grace and his distinguished bearing. The chronicles of the time are full of the most superlative descriptions of this whole affair, and often they seem lost in wonderment, lacking words with which to describe the scene properly. Before the wedding, in accord with mediæval custom, Edward received knighthood at the hands of King Alfonso. In that same old monastery at Las Huelgas where the youth Fernando had kept his lonely vigil before he had been knighted by his noble mother, Queen Berenguela, the English prince now kept his watch; and when the morning came and he stood, tall and fair, clothed in a robe of white, ready to receive the accolade, before a company of chosen knights and ladies, the scene must have been wonderfully impressive. The bride, Eleanor, had been a great favorite with all her people, of both high and low degree, and all were glad to see that the future seemed to smile upon her.

A worthy companion to the wise Berenguela is found in the person of Maria de Molina, the wife of Sancho IV.,

called the Ferocious, King of Castile. His reign, which had extended over a period of eleven years, came to a close with his death in the year 1295, and in all that time there had been nothing but discord and confusion, warfare and assassination, as Sancho's claim to the throne had been disputed by several pretenders, and they lost no occasion to harass him by plot and revolution. It may well be imagined, then, that when he died, leaving his throne to his son Fernando, a child of nine, the situation was most perplexing for the queen-mother, who had been made regent, by the terms of her husband's will, until Fernando should become of age. A further matter which tended to complicate the situation was the fact that the marriage between Sancho and Maria had never been sanctioned by the pope, as the two were within the forbidden limits of consanguinity, and he had refused to grant his special dispensation. With this doubt as to her son's legitimacy, Maria was placed in a position which was doubly hard, and if she had not been a woman of keen diplomacy and great wisdom, she would never have been able to steer her ship of state in safety amid so many threatening dangers. Her first care was to induce the pope to grant, after much persuasion, the long-deferred dispensation which legalized her marriage; and this matter settled, she was ready to enter the conflict and endeavor to maintain her rights. The first to attempt her overthrow was the Infante Juan, the young king's uncle, who made an alliance with the Moorish king of Granada and assumed a threatening attitude. Maria sent against him her greatest nobles, Haro, and the Lords of Lara; but she had been deceived in the loyalty of these followers, as they promptly deserted the regent's cause and, with all their men, went over to the insurgents and helped to make more powerful the coalition which was forming against the infant king. For

a brief moment Maria was in despair and felt almost ready to yield in the face of the opposition, as the hostile combination now included Portugal, Aragon, Navarre, France, and Granada, and it was their intent to separate the kingdoms of Leon and Castile if possible and undo all that Berenguela had labored so hard and with such success to accomplish. Inasmuch as this was, above all else, a quarrel which concerned the nobility, a contention which had its rise in the jealousy and mutual distrust of several powerful houses, Maria, with a keen knowledge of the situation, and with a sagacity which was rather surprising in a woman untrained in politics or government, decided to win to her side the great mass of the common people, with whom she had always lived in peace and harmony. Her first act was to call a meeting of the Cortes in Valladolid, which was the only city upon which she could depend in this crisis. The Cortes speedily acknowledged Fernando IV. as king, and with this encouragement Maria de Molina set bravely about her arduous task of organization and defence. Few of the nobles rallied to her support, but she soon won over the chartered towns by the liberal treatment she accorded them in matters of taxation and by her protection of the various civic brotherhoods which had been organized by the people that they might defend themselves from the injustice of the nobility, which was now showing itself in countless tyrannical and petty acts. She labored early and late, conducted her government in a most businesslike manner, convoked the Cortes in regular session every year, and by the sheer force of her integrity and her moral strength she finally quelled all internal disturbances and brought back the government to its former strength and solidity. In the year 1300 Fernando was declared king in his own right, at the age of fourteen, and then, for a short time, it looked as if all

that the regent had sought to accomplish might suddenly be nullified. The king, inclined to be arrogant, and with his head somewhat turned as the result of his sudden accession to power, was prevailed upon to listen to evil counsellors, who tried in every way to make him believe that Maria had administered her regency with an eye to her own interests, and that much of the revenue which legally belonged to him had been diverted to her own private uses. Fernando, in spite of all his mother's goodness, was simple enough to believe these idle tales, and, in most unfilial and suspecting fashion, he sternly ordered Maria to render up a detailed account of her stewardship during his minority. Maria was much affected by this thoughtless and inconsiderate act, but before she had had time to reply or attempt her own defence in any way, a storm of indignation broke forth from the free towns, and Fernando was informed that he would not be allowed to enter the town of Medina del Campo, where the Leonese Cortes was to be held, unless he restored his mother to favor and brought her with him to the assembly. Fernando knew enough to fear the veiled threat which this communication contained, and the queen-regent appeared with him at the opening of the session. The scene which followed is pathetic in the extreme, and shows the magnanimity and unselfishness of Maria in a most striking manner. She spoke to the members of the Cortes, recalled their former struggles against the encroachments of the nobles, and urged them to prudent action, that there might be no further occasion for domestic strife. Loyalty to country and to king were the keynotes of her speech, and before she had finished, those who had assembled in anger, ready to renounce their allegiance on account of Fernando's shameful treatment of his mother, were now willing to forgive and pardon for that same mother's sake.

This point once established and a loyal following secured, Maria proceeded to give in detail that account of her stewardship which had been called for, and she had no trouble in showing that her administration had been above reproach. Then it was that Fernando made public acknowledgment of the fact that he had been led astray by evil-minded advisers; and the Cortes adjourned, faithful to the king and more than ever devoted to his mother. At Fernando's death in 1312, Maria de Molina was again called to the regency, so great was her reputation for wisdom and fair play; and when she ended her public career, in 1324, all hastened to do honor to her memory, and she was called Maria the Great, a title which has never been bestowed upon any other queen-regent in Spain. Her reputation for goodness was unchanged by the lapse of time, her goodness stands approved to-day, and two dramatists, Tirso de Molina and Roca de Togores, have depicted her as a heroine in their plays.

Under the reign of Alfonso XI., Castile was rent by two factions, one in support of the king's wife, Maria of Portugal, and the other friendly to his beautiful mistress, Leonora de Guzman. When a youth of seventeen, Alfonso had fallen captive to the charms of the fair Leonora; but his grandmother, Maria de Molina, actuated by political motives, had forced him to marry the Infanta Maria of Portugal. What might have been expected came to pass: Maria was the queen in name, but Leonora was the queen in fact. After three years had passed and no heir to the throne had been born, Alfonso threatened to plead his kinship as a reason and get a divorce; but Leonora, anticipating the trouble into which this might plunge the country, as Alfonso was eager to marry her as soon as the divorce should have been granted, urged him not to bring about this separation and did all in her power to make him

abide by the arrangement which had been made for him. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that two sons were finally born to Maria and the succession was assured, Leonora was by far the most influential woman in the kingdom, and was in every way better fitted to rule as queen than the neglected Maria. Leonora had her court and her courtiers, and had not only the love but the respect and confidence of the king, and exercised a considerable interest in affairs of state for a space of twenty years. So established was her position at the court, that she was allowed unhindered to found an order of merit, whose members wore a red ribbon and were called Caballeros de la Banda. This order was for the promotion of courtesy and knightly behavior, as it seems that there was still much crudity of manner in Castile; and according to Miss Yonge, the ceremonious Arabs complained that the Castilians were brave men, but that they had no manners, and entered each other's houses freely without asking permission. Finally, after the battle of Salado in 1340, which was a great triumph for Alfonso and the Christians, the king was induced to part definitely with his mistress. Maria, the true wife, had long been jealous of her power and had lost no opportunity to bring about her downfall. In the course of their long relationship Leonora had borne ten children to the king, and her beauty, if accounts be true, was in no way impaired; but, as he grew older, Alfonso could see more clearly the complications which might ensue if he persisted in this double course; and so, with a heavy heart, he consented to the separation, but not without having given to Leonora the well-fortified city of Medina-Sidonia, while her children were so well provided for that the royal revenues were sadly depleted. With the death of Alfonso in 1350 came the opportunity which Queen Maria had long since sought in vain, an

opportunity for revenge. Leonora was summoned to Seville, that Maria might consult with her with regard to the interests of her children; and when the one-time mistress showed some disinclination to accept this invitation and gave evident signs of distrust, two noblemen of Maria's following pledged their honor for her safety. Assured by this show of good faith, Leonora went to Seville as she had been summoned, but no sooner had she entered the walls of the city than she was made a prisoner at Maria's order, dragged about in chains after the court, which was travelling to Burgos, and finally she was sent to Talavera, where she met an ignominious death at the hands of a servant, who cruelly strangled her. Strange to say, this act caused no special comment at the time, for, in spite of Leonora's general popularity, her influence had been of such incalculable harm to Maria and her followers in more ways than one, that their revenge was taken somewhat as a matter of course. Maria, however, in this display of savagery, had done more than she had anticipated; for, although she had continually tried to excite her son to this revenge upon her rival, her desire for bloody satisfaction had been satisfied at Leonora's death, and she now tried to have Pedro treat Leonora's sons as his own brothers, but all to no purpose. Young Pedro was cruel by nature; the early training which he had received from her hands had in no way softened him, and as a natural result, when he came to the throne and became his own master, he soon made himself known and feared by his many terrible and wicked deeds; and so marked did this fierce trait of character appear, that he was ever known as Pedro the Cruel, much to his mother's shame.

"If you ever feel disposed, Samivel, to go a-marryin' anybody,—no matter who,—just you shut yourself up in your own room, if you've got one, and pison yourself

off-hand,"—such was the sententious advice of the elder Weller, as recorded by Charles Dickens in the immortal pages of the *Pickwick Papers;* and investigation will show that in all literatures, from the earliest times, similar warnings have been uttered to men who contemplated matrimony. A Tuscan proverb says: "In buying horses and in taking a wife, shut your eyes tight and commend yourself to God;" and a sage of Araby has remarked: "Before going to war, say a prayer; before going to sea, say two prayers; before marrying, say three prayers;" but the majority of men since the world began have been content to close their eyes tightly or utter their three prayers and take the goods the gods provide. Pedro the Cruel was no exception to this rule, and his capricious ventures in search of married bliss would fill many pages. According to Burke, "he was lawfully married in 1352 to the lady who passed during her entire life as his mistress, Maria de Padilla; he was certainly married to Blanche of Bourbon in 1353; and his seduction, or rather his violation, of Juana de Castro was accomplished by a third profanation of the sacrament, when the Bishops of Salamanca and Avila, both accessories to the king's scandalous bigamy, pronounced the blessing of the Church upon his brutal dishonor of a noble lady." Whether Pedro was ever married to Maria de Padilla is still an open question, but, if not his wife, she was his mistress for many years and had great power over him. The details of all this life of intrigue are somewhat confused, but enough is known to make it clear that Pedro was as cruel in love as in war and politics.

The queen-mother, ignorant of her son's marriage to Maria de Padilla, or deciding to ignore it, prevailed upon Pedro to ask for the hand of Blanche, the daughter of the Duke of Bourbon, and sister to Jeanne, wife to Charles,

the heir of France. His request was granted, and the king sent his half-brother, the Master of Santiago, one of Leonora's sons, to fetch the bride to Spain. While this journey was being made, Pedro fell in love with one of the noble ladies in waiting of Doña Isabel of Albuquerque, and so great was his passion for this dark-eyed damsel that it was with difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to leave her and go to greet the French princess when she finally arrived in Valladolid. But he tore himself away, went to Blanche, and was married with great pomp and ceremony. Some had said before the marriage that Maria de Padilla must have bewitched Pedro, so great was his infatuation; and three days after the wedding a strange thing happened, which caused people to shake their heads again and suggest the interference of the powers of sorcery. For, after this short time, Pedro rode away from Valladolid and his new queen and went to Montalvao, where Maria de Padilla was waiting to receive him. Just what had happened, it is somewhat difficult to discover, and the story is told that the king, listening to scandalous talk, was made to believe that his royal messenger and half-brother, Fadrique, had played the rôle of Sir Tristram as he brought the lady back, and that she had been a somewhat willing Isolde. There were others who said that Blanche, knowing the king's volatile disposition and of his relations with the notorious Maria, had endeavored upon the eve of her marriage to seek aid from the arts of magic in her effort to win the love of her husband, and had obtained from a Jewish sorcerer a belt which she was told would make Pedro faithful, kind, and true. But the story goes on to say that this wizard had been bribed by Maria de Padilla; and when the king tried on the girdle which his wife presented, it forthwith was changed into a hideous serpent, which filled him with such disgust that he could

no longer bear the sight of her. Don Alfonso of Albuquerque, who had first introduced Pedro to Maria de Padilla, now tried to take her away from him, in the hope that he might be prevailed upon to return to his wife, the unfortunate Blanche. This so angered the king that he resolved upon Don Alfonso's death, and if it had not been for the timely warning given by Maria, this gentleman would certainly have been assassinated. This action on Maria's part, however, was the occasion for a fresh outburst of anger; and Pedro left, wooed Doña Juana de Castro in stormy fashion, and induced her to marry him, on the statement that he had made a secret protest against Blanche and that the pope would soon annul this marriage. Thomas Hardy has said that the most delicate women get used to strange moral situations, and there must have been something of this in Juana's makeup, or she would never have been forced into so shameful a position; but, however that may be, she was made to rue the day, as the king left her the next morning for Maria, his Venus Victrix, and never went to see her again, although he gave her the town of Dueñas and allowed her to be addressed as "queen." The chronicles of the time tell of the remarkable beauty of Maria and of the adulation she enjoyed in the heyday of her prosperity. As an instance of the extreme gallantry of the courtiers, we are informed that, with King Pedro, it was their custom to attend the lovely favorite at her bath and, upon her leaving it, to drink of its water.

The fate of Blanche was still hanging in the balance. Pedro, on leaving her so abruptly, had left orders that she be taken to his palace at Toledo, but Blanche, fearing to trust herself to his power, tried to slip from his grasp and finally succeeded in doing so. Arrived in Toledo, she asked permission, before entering the palace, to go to the cathedral, for mass; and once within the walls of the sanctuary,

she refused to go back to her guards, demanded the right of protection which the churches had always possessed in the Middle Ages, and, finally, told her story with such dramatic effect, that the clergy crowded about her, the nobles unsheathed their swords and swore to uphold her cause, and a revolution was begun which soon assumed great proportions and so frightened Pedro that he consented to take back his wife and send away the baleful Maria. For four years his nobles kept stern watch over him, and he was never allowed to ride out of his palace without a guard of a thousand men at his heels, so fearful were they that he might break away from them, surround himself again with evil counsellors, and recommence his career of wantonness and crime. Their efforts were at last of no avail, as he eluded his followers one day upon a hunting expedition, through the kindly intervention of a heavy fog, rode off to Segovia, ordered his mother, who had been exercising a practical regency during this period, to send him the great seal of state, and then he proceeded to wreak vengeance upon all those who had been instrumental in his humiliation. Blanche was sent to prison at Medina-Sidonia on a trumped-up charge, was shamefully treated during the time of her captivity, and died in 1359, in the same year that Maria de Padilla, discredited and cast aside, also found rest in death. Pitiful as these stories are, they serve to show that women, even at this time, when Spain was the seat of learning and refinement for all Europe, were but the servants of their lords and masters, and that passion still ran riot, while justice sat upon a tottering seat.

In Aragon, near the close of this fourteenth century, similar scenes of cruelty were enacted, although the king, Juan I., cannot be compared for cruelty with the infamous Pedro. Burke has said that if Pedro was not absolutely

the most cruel of men, he was undoubtedly the greatest blackguard who ever sat upon a throne, and King Juan was far from meriting similar condemnation. Sibyl de Foix, his stepmother, had exercised so strange and wonderful a power over his father, that when Juan came to the throne he was more than eager to turn upon this enchantress and make her render up the wide estates which the late king had been prevailed upon to leave to her. It is actually asserted that Juan charged Sibyl with witchcraft and insisted that she had bewitched his father and that she had all sorts of mysterious dealings with Satan and his evil spirits. Whatever the truth may have been, the unhappy queen only escaped torture and death by surrendering all of the property which had been given her. Juan was by no means a misogynist, however, for he was noted for his gallantry, and his beautiful queen, Violante, was surrounded by a bevy of court beauties who were famed throughout all Christendom at this time. Juan's capital at Saragossa was the talk of all Europe. It became famed for its elegance, was a veritable school of good manners and courtly grace, and to it flocked poets and countless gentlemen who were knightly soldiers of fortune, only too willing to serve a noble patron who knew how to appreciate the value of their chivalry. Violante was the acknowledged leader of this gay and brilliant world; at her instigation courts of love are said to have been established, and in every way did she try to reproduce the brilliant social life which had been the wonder and admiration of the world before Simon de Montfort had blighted the fair life of Provence. More than ever before in Spain, women were put into positions of prominence in this court; and so great was the poetic and literary atmosphere which surrounded them, that they were known more than once to try their hands at verse making. Their

attempts were modest, however, and no one has ever been tempted to quote against them Alphonse Karr's well-known epigram: "A woman who writes, commits two sins: she increases the number of books, and she decreases the number of women;" for they were content, for the most part, to be the source of inspiration for their minstrel knights. Violante's gay court was looked upon with questioning eye, however, by the majority of her rude subjects, and, finally, when the sum demanded from the Cortes each year for the maintenance of this brilliant establishment continued to increase in a most unreasonable manner, the Cortes called a halt, Violante was obliged to change her mode of life, and the number of her ladies in waiting was reduced by half, while other unnecessary expenses were cut in proportion.

Chapter XVII

The Age of Isabella—Spanish Unity

XVII

THE AGE OF ISABELLA—SPANISH UNITY

IN the first half of the fifteenth century in Spain there was one woman, Isabella of Portugal, who deserves to be remembered for her many good qualities and for the fact that she was the mother of the great Queen Isabella. It was as the wife of John II. of Castile that the elder Isabella was brought into the political life of the time and made to play her part. This King John was one of the weakest and in some ways the most inefficient of monarchs, for, in spite of his intelligence, his good manners, and his open and substantial appreciation of the learned men of his time, his political life was contemptible, as he was completely under the control of the court favorite, Alvaro de Luna. *Alvaro de Luna era el hombre mas politico, disimulado, y astuto de su tiempo* [Alvaro de Luna was the most politic, deceitful, and astute man of his time], so says the Spanish historian Quintana; and as Burke puts it, he had the strongest head and the bravest heart in all Castile. There was no one to excel him in knightly sport, no one lived in greater magnificence, and he was, in truth, "the glass of fashion, the mould of form, the observed of all observers." To this perfect knight, the king was a mere puppet who could be moved this way or that with perfect impunity. So complete was the ascendency of Luna, that it is said on good authority that the king hesitated to go to bed until he had received his favorite's

permission. When King John's first wife, Maria of Portugal, died in 1445, it was his desire to marry a princess of the royal house of France; but, for his own reasons, the Lord of Luna willed otherwise, and the king, submissive, obeyed orders and espoused Isabella of Portugal, a granddaughter of King John I. No sooner had this fiery princess taken her place beside King John, after their marriage in 1450, than she began to assert her independence in a way which caused great scandal at the court and brought dismay to the heart of Alvaro de Luna. Isabella opposed the plans of this masterful nobleman at every turn, refused to accept his dictation about the slightest matter, declined to make terms with him in any way, and declared herself entirely beyond his control, in spite of the fact that he had been responsible for her marriage. King John was at first as much surprised as any of the other people at the boldness of his young queen, but he soon saw that it would be possible, with Isabella's aid, to throw off the hateful yoke which Luna had put about his neck, and this is what took place in a very short time. The queen was more than a match for all who opposed her, court intrigues, instigated by Luna, were to no avail, and in the end he had to give up, beaten by a woman, and one whom he had hoped to make his agent, or ally, in the further subjection of the king. A year after the marriage of John and Isabella, the Princess Isabella was born, and with her advent there came new hope for Spain.

In the neighboring little kingdom of Navarre there was another princess who lived at about the same time, who distinguished herself not by the same boldness of manner perhaps, but by a quiet dignity, and by a wise and temperate spirit which was often sorely tried. Blanche, Princess of Navarre, had been married in 1419 to the Prince of Aragon, John; but in the early years of their married

life, before Navarre, the substantial part of Blanche's marriage portion, came under her definite control, the young prince spent the most of his time in Castile, where he was connected with many of the court intrigues which were being woven around the romantic figure of Alvaro de Luna. Finally, Blanche became Queen of Navarre, upon her father's death in 1425, but John was still too much concerned with his Castilian affairs to care to leave them and come to take his place at the side of his wife's throne. For three years Blanche was left to her own devices, and during that time she ruled her little state without the aid or assistance of king or prime minister, and was so eminently successful in all her undertakings that her capacity was soon a matter of favorable comment. Finally, in 1428, John was forced to leave Castile, as Luna had gained the upper hand for the moment, and he considered this as a favorable opportunity to go to Navarre and gain recognition as Queen Blanche's husband. Accordingly, he went in great state to Pamplona, the capital city, and there, with imposing ceremonies, the public and official coronation of John and Blanche was celebrated. At the same time, Blanche's son Charles was recognized as his mother's successor in her ancestral kingdom. But Navarre was not a congenial territory for King John, who was of a restless, impulsive disposition; and he was so bored by the provincial gayety of Pamplona that after a very short stay he could endure it no longer, and set off for Italy, leaving Blanche in entire control as before. Navarre was a sort of halfway ground between France and the various governments of Spain, and was often the centre of much intrigue and plotted treachery; but John was so completely overshadowed now by Luna's almost absolute power, that he knew there was no field for his activity at home. Blanche, however, was confronted more than once by the

most delicate situations, as her good city of Pamplona was constantly filled with the agents of foreign powers; but so firm was the queen's character, and so careful were her judgments, that she was able to administer her government until her death, in 1441, with much success and very little criticism.

The next woman to occupy a conspicuous place in the annals of Aragon and Navarre is Doña Juana Henriquez, the second wife of this same John II. Doña Juana was the daughter of Don Fadrique Henriquez, Admiral of Castile, who had become the most influential man in the kingdom during a moment of temporary disgrace for Alvaro de Luna; and at this time of his success, for factional reasons, John considered that an alliance with the admiral might further his own plans with respect to Castile. This second wife was not a woman of high birth, and was totally unaccustomed to the new surroundings in which she found herself placed; but with the quick adaptive power which is possessed by women to so marked a degree, Juana was soon able to hold her own at court and to make a good showing, in fact, on any occasion. She was a very beautiful woman, of the traditional Spanish type, with dark eyes and dark hair, and a very engaging manner, and to her cleverness she joined a great ambition which made her unceasing in her efforts for her husband's advancement. She was inclined to be haughty and domineering in tone, was not overscrupulous, as might have been expected of one who had lived in the atmosphere of the Castilian court at this time, and the sum total of her efforts did little more than to perpetuate the period of strife and turmoil. The admiral, Don Fadrique, was in control for but a short time; and upon the return to power of Alvaro, John was driven out of the country, after being wounded in battle, and the admiral himself was killed in the fighting at Olmedo. John

took his wife with him to Pamplona, where he now went, as that city offered him a most convenient exile. His return to his wife's country was not made in peace, for no sooner had he arrived than he proceeded to dispossess his son Charles, who had been openly acknowledged as his mother's heir at the time of her coronation. In the warfare which ensued, and which was a snarl of petty, selfish interests, Juana did yeoman service in her husband's cause. At the time of her hurried flight to Navarre, she had tarried for a short time in the little town of Sos, in Aragon, and there she had given birth to a son, Fernando, who was to be instrumental in bringing peace and glory to Spain in spite of the fact that he first saw the light in the midst of such tumult and confusion. Notwithstanding her delicate condition, Juana was soon in the thick of the fray, as she hastened to the town of Estella, which had been threatened, fortified the place, and defended it effectually from all the attacks made upon it by the hostile forces. She seems to have been a born fighter, and, though her efforts may often have been misdirected, she must have exerted a powerful influence upon the mind of her son, who was to show himself at a later day as good a fighter in a larger cause.

To turn back to Castile now for a time, in the labyrinth of this much involved period, where the duplication of names and the multiplicity of places makes it difficult to thread one's way intelligently, it will be found that the court, during the reign of Henry IV., was chiefly distinguished by its scandalous immorality. Quintana, in his volume entitled the *Grandezas de Madrid,* gives enough information on the subject to reveal the fact that the roués of that period could learn little from their counterparts to-day, as the most shameless proceedings were of every-day occurrence, and men and women both seemed to vie

with each other in their wickedness. It would be somewhat unjust to include the great body of the people in this vicious class, as the most conspicuous examples of human degradation and degeneracy were to be found at the court, but the fact remains that public ideas in regard to moral questions were very lax; the clergy was corrupt, and the moral tone of the whole country was deplorably low, as judged by the standards of to-day. Women deceived their husbands with much the same relish as Boccaccio depicts in his *Decameron;* passions were everywhere the moving forces, in the higher and lower classes as well, and nowhere was there to be seen the continence which comes from an intelligent self-control.

In the midst of this carnival of vice and corruption, King Henry, the older brother of the Princess Isabella, was a most striking figure. He had been divorced from his first wife, Blanche of Aragon, on the ground of impotence, but had succeeded, in spite of this humiliation, in contracting another alliance, this time with the beautiful, but not overscrupulous, Juana of Portugal. Beltran de Cueva, a brilliant nobleman, was the favorite and influential person at the court at this time, and his gradual rise to favor had been due in no small measure to the protection of the new queen, who was Beltran's all but acknowledged mistress and took no pains to conceal the matter at any time. In fact, at a great tournament held near Madrid in 1461, soon after Juana's arrival at the court, Beltran posed as her preferred champion, and held the lists against all comers in defence of his mistress's preëminent and matchless beauty. The king was far from displeased at this liaison between Beltran and the queen, and he was so delighted at the knight's unvarying success in this tournament, that the story goes that he founded a monastery upon the spot and named it, in honor of Saint Jerome and

Beltran, San Geronimo del Paso, or of the "passage of arms"! The king was little moved by all this, for the simple reason that he was paying a most ardent court at the same time to one of the queen's ladies in waiting. This Lady Guiomar, his mistress, was beautiful, but bold and vicious, as her relations with such a king demonstrate, but for a time at least she was riding upon the crest of the wave. Proud in her questionable honor, and daring to be jealous of the real queen, she made King Henry pay dearly for her favors, and she was soon installed in a palace of her own and living in a splendor and magnificence which rivalled that of the queen herself. The Archbishop of Seville, strange to relate, openly espoused her cause. Her insolent and domineering ways were a fit counterpart to those of the queen, and the unfortunate people were soon making open complaint. Beltran, the king in fact, was the open and accepted favorite of the queen, and Henry, the king in name only, was devoting himself to a vain and shallow court beauty who wished to be a veritable queen and longed for the overthrow of her rival! Such was the sad spectacle presented to the world by Castile at this time, but the crisis was soon to come which would clarify the air and lead to a more satisfactory condition in the state. Matters were hastened to their climax when the queen gave birth, in 1462, to a daughter who was called after her mother, Juana; but so evident was the paternity of this pitiful little princess, that she was at once christened La Beltraneja in common parlance; and by that sobriquet she is best known in history. It is doubtful if the sluggish moral natures of this time would have been moved by this fact, if the king had not insisted that this baby girl should be acknowledged as his daughter and heiress to the crown of Castile. This was too much for the leaders of the opposition, and they demanded that

Henry's younger brother, Alfonso, be recognized as his successor. This proposition brought about civil warfare, which was ended by Alfonso's death in 1468, and then Isabella was generally recognized as the real successor to her unworthy brother Henry, in spite of the claims he continued to put forth in favor of La Beltraneja.

Before the cessation of domestic hostilities, Isabella had been sorely tried by various projects which had been advanced for her marriage. She had been brought up by her mother, Queen Isabella, in the little town of Arevalo, which had been settled upon her at the time of the death of her husband, King John II. There, in quiet and seclusion, quite apart from the vice and tumult of the capital, the little princess had been under the close tutelage of the Church, as her mother had grown quite devout with advancing years; and as Isabella ripened into womanhood, it became evident that she possessed a high seriousness and a strength of character quite unusual. Still, all was uncertain as to her fate. Her brother Henry had first endeavored to marry her to Alfonso V. of Portugal, the elder and infamous brother of his own shameless queen, but Isabella had declined this alliance on the ground that it had not been properly ratified by the Cortes of Castile, and as a result the plan was soon dropped. In the midst of the rebellion which had broken out after Henry's attempt to foist La Beltraneja upon the state, he had proposed as a conciliatory measure that one of the most turbulent of the factional leaders, Don Pedro Giron, Grand Master of Calatrava, should wed Isabella, and the offer had been accepted. This man, who was old enough to be her father, was stained with vice, in spite of his exalted position in the religious Order of Calatrava, and his character was so notoriously vile that the mere mention of such an alliance was nothing short of insult to Isabella. Again

she did not allow herself to be dominated by her brother, and after announcing that she utterly refused to consent to such an arrangement, she shut herself up in her apartments and declared her intention of resisting any attempts which might be made to coerce her. But the king gave no heed to her remonstrances, and made arrangements for the wedding festivities, the bridegroom having been summoned. The pope had absolved the profligate grand master from his vows of celibacy, which he had never kept, and poor Isabella, sustained only by the moral support of her courageous mother, was beginning to quake and tremble, as she knew not what might happen, and the prospect for her future happiness was far from good. A providential illness overcame the dreaded bridegroom when he was less than forty leagues from Madrid, as it turned out, and Isabella was able to breathe again freely.

With the death of the younger Alfonso, there were many who urged Isabella to declare herself at once as the Queen of Castile and to head a revolution against her brother, the unworthy Henry. Her natural inclinations, as well as the whole character of her early education, had made her devout, almost bigoted, by nature, and it was but natural that her advisers at this time in her career were mostly members of the clergy, who saw in this young queen-to-be a great support for the Spanish Church in the future. But this girl of sixteen was wiser than her advisers, for she refused to head a revolution, and contented herself with a claim to the throne upon her brother's death. Such a claim necessarily had to run counter to the claim of the dubious Princess Juana, and to discredit her cause as much as possible her sobriquet *La Beltraneja* was zealously revived. Sure of the support of the clergy, and still wishing to be near to her advisers, Isabella went to the monastery at Avila, where, it is said, deputations

from all parts of Castile came to entreat her to assume the crown at once. Her policy of delay made possible an interview between sister and brother, at which Henry, unable to withstand the manifest current of public sentiment, agreed to accept Isabella as his successor and as the lawful heir to the throne of Castile. With this question settled in this satisfactory way, the matter of Isabella's marriage again became an affair of national importance. There were suitors in plenty, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, brother of Edward IV. of England, and the Duke of Guienne, brother of Louis XI. and heir to the French throne, being among the number; but the young Isabella, influenced as much by policy as by any personal feeling in the matter, had decided that she would wed Fernando, son of John II. of Aragon and his second wife, the dashing Doña Juana Henriquez, and nothing would change her from this fixed purpose. In a former day it had been a woman, Queen Berenguela, who had labored long and successfully for the union of Castile and Leon; and now another woman, this time a girl still in her teens, was laboring for a still greater Spanish unity, which will consolidate the interests of the two kingdoms of Aragon and Castile and give to all Spain the peace which was now such a necessity to the future well-being of the country. There were numerous obstacles thrown in the way of this marriage, which was not pleasing to all of the Castilian factions. The Archbishop of Seville tried to kidnap Isabella to prevent it, and would have done so but for the activity of another prelate, the Archbishop of Toledo, who rescued the unfortunate maiden and carried her off to sure friends in Valladolid, where she awaited Fernando's coming.

Burke gives an admirable description of Isabella at this time, in the following lines: "That royal and noble lady was then in the full bloom of her maiden beauty. She had

just completed her eighteenth year. In stature somewhat superior to the majority of her countrywomen, and inferior to none in personal grace and charm, her golden hair and her bright blue eyes told perhaps of her Lancastrian ancestry. Her beauty was remarkable in a land where beauty has never been rare; her dignity was conspicuous in a country where dignity is the heritage not of a class but of a nation. Of her courage, no less than of her discretion, she had already given abundant proofs. Bold and resolute, modest and reserved, she had all the simplicity of a great lady born for a great position. She became in after life something of an autocrat and overmuch of a bigot. But it could not be laid to the charge of a persecuted princess of nineteen that she was devoted to the service of her religion." Such was Isabella when she married Fernando; and the wedding was quietly celebrated at Valladolid, in the house of a friend, Don Juan de Vivero, while the warlike Archbishop of Toledo had charge of the ceremony. Never was there a simpler royal wedding in all the annals of Spanish history: there was no throng of gay nobles, there were none of the customary feasts or tournaments, there was no military display, no glitter of jewels, no shimmer of silks and satins, but all was quiet and serious, and the few guests at this solemn consecration seemed impressed with the dignity of the occasion. The pathway of the young princess was not all strewn with roses, however, as her marriage seemed to enrage her degenerate brother and to stimulate him to new deeds of unworthiness. In spite of the fact that King Henry's shameless conduct in private life had been given a severe rebuke, by implication at least, at the time that Isabella was being urged on all sides to declare herself as queen and dispossess her brother, this perverted monarch continued his profligate career in most open fashion. He had not only

one mistress but many of them at the court, he loaded them with riches and with favors, and often, in a somewhat questionable excess of religious zeal, he appointed them to posts of honor and importance in conventual establishments! No sooner had Isabella's wedding been celebrated than Henry began to stir up trouble again, declared that the queen's daughter, La Beltraneja, was the only lawful heir to his estates, and to further his projects he succeeded in arranging for a betrothal ceremony between this young woman and the young Duke of Guienne, heir presumptive to the crown of France, who had been one of Isabella's suitors, as will be remembered. This French alliance, threatening for a moment, was soon impaired by the unexpected death of the young duke, and Isabella's position was strengthened daily by the growing disbelief in La Beltraneja's legitimacy. To give in detail an account of all the plots which were concocted against Isabella would take many chapters in itself, for she met with bitter opposition in spite of the fact that she seems to have won the sympathies of the larger part of the population of the two countries.

In the midst of this continual intrigue came the news of King Henry's death in 1474, and then Isabella, who had been biding her time, was proclaimed queen by her own orders, and the proclamation was made at Segovia, which was then her place of residence. As a mere matter of curiosity, it may be interesting to record the long list of titles which actually belonged to Isabella at this time. She was Queen of Castile, Aragon, Leon, Sicily, Granada, Toledo, Valencia, Galicia, the Mallorcas, Seville, Sardinia, Cordova, Corsica, Murcia, Jaen, the Algarves, Alguynias, Gibraltar, the Canary Islands, Countess of Barcelona, Sovereign Lady of Biscay and Molina, Duchess of Athens and Neopatria, Countess of Roussillon, Cerdagne,

Marchioness of Ovistan and Goziano! After assuming the heavy burden implied by this somewhat overpowering list of titles, the young queen's first serious annoyance came from her husband, strange as the case may seem. Fernando of Aragon was the nearest living male representative of King Henry, and he somewhat selfishly began to take steps to supplant Isabella in her succession. Little did he know his wife, however, if he imagined it possible to deprive her of Castile, and events soon showed that she was the stronger of the two. At her orders, the laws and precedents with regard to royal succession were carefully examined, and it was soon published abroad that there was no legal objection to her assumption of power. Fernando was appeased to some degree by certain concessions made by his wife, their daughter Juana was recognized as heiress of Castile, and, all in all, in spite of his disgruntled state of mind, he wisely concluded to remain at Isabella's side and help to fight her battles. A new cause for alarm soon appeared: another of Isabella's former suitors, Alfonso, King of Portugal, was affianced to the pitiful La Beltraneja, the two were proclaimed King and Queen of Castile, and the country was at once invaded by a hostile force. Isabella interested herself personally in the equipment of her troops, she faced every emergency bravely, and after a short campaign her banners were triumphant and all things seemed to indicate that an era of peace had been begun. The pope dissolved the marriage between Alfonso and La Beltraneja soon after, and these two unhappy mortals forthwith retired from the world, she to the convent of Saint Clare at Coimbra, while the poor king resigned his crown and became a Franciscan monk. So great, in fact, was Isabella's victory at this time, and so keen was her appreciation of the fact that her greatest cause for alarm had been completely removed

from the scene of action, that she walked barefooted in a procession to the church of Saint Paul at Tordesillas, to express her feeling of thanksgiving for her great success.

Following close upon the heels of this last stroke of good fortune for Castile came the news that the old King of Aragon, Fernando's father, was dead, and now, in truth, came that unity of Spain which had been the dream of more than one Utopian mind in days gone by. With fortune smiling upon them in so many ways, the sovereigns of this united realm were still confronted by many serious problems of government, especially in Castile, which called for speedy settlement. The long years of weak and vicious administration had filled the country with all kinds of abuses, and the task of internal improvement was difficult enough to cause even a stouter heart to quail. The queen in all these matters displayed a rare sagacity and developed a rare faculty for handling men which stood her in good stead. The recalcitrant nobles and the rebellious commoners were all brought to terms by her influence, and her power was soon unquestioned. She had an army at her back and a crowd of officers ready to carry out and enforce her instructions to the letter, but, more than all this, her great and personal triumph was the result of her tremendous personal power and magnetism. She travelled all over Spain in a most tireless fashion, she met the people in a familiar manner, and showed her sympathy for them in countless ways; but there was always about her something of that divinity which doth hedge a king, which made all both fear and respect her. No nook or corner of the whole country was too remote, her visits covered the whole realm, and everywhere it was plain to see that her coming had been followed by the most satisfactory results.

Having thus created a great and mighty public sentiment in her favor, Isabella was not slow to attack the great questions of national reforms, which were sadly in need of her attention. She boldly curtailed the privileges of the grandees of Spain, and to such good effect that she transformed, in an incredibly short space of time, the most turbulent aristocracy on the continent into a body of devoted and submissive retainers, the counterpart of which was not to be found in any other country of Europe. Her wide grasp of affairs is seen in the support she was willing to give to Columbus in his voyage overseas, and time and time again she showed herself equal to the most trying situations in a way which was most surprising in one of her age and experience. Her firmness of character was ever felt, although her manners were always mild and her whole attitude was calculated to conciliate rather than to antagonize.

Pure and discreet in every way, Isabella was ever a zealous Christian, and she never failed to aid the Church when the means were within her reach. The gradual decline of the Moorish power in Spain had given rise to a most unfortunate spirit of religious intolerance, with which Isabella was soon called upon to deal, and her action in this matter is but characteristic of the time in which she lived. Spain was filled with Jews, who had settled unmolested under the Moslem rule, and there were also many Moriscoes, or people of mixed Spanish and Moorish origin; and these unfortunates were now to be submitted to the tortures of that diabolical institution known as the Inquisition, because they were not enthusiastic in their support of the Catholic religion. Isabella tried to oppose the introduction of these barbarous practices into Castile, but by specious argument her scruples were overcome and she was made to bow to the will of the pope and his

legates. In the workings of the Inquisition little distinction was made between men and women, and both seem to have suffered alike at the hands of these cruel ministers of the Church. In 1498, for the first time, it was decreed that men and women held under arrest by order of the inquisitor should be provided with separate prisons, and it is easy to imagine from this one statement that Isabella must have been very much of a bigot, or she could not have allowed so flagrant an abuse to exist for any length of time, no matter what the occasion for it. When the power of the inquisitor seemed about to extend to the Jews for the first time, they offered to Fernando and Isabella thirty thousand pieces of silver, for the final campaigns against the Moors, if they might be allowed to live unmolested. The proposition was being favorably entertained, when Torquemada, the chief inquisitor, suddenly appeared before the king and queen, with a crucifix in his uplifted hand; and if the traditional account be true, he addressed them in these words: "Judas sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver, your highnesses are about to do the same for thirty thousand; behold Him, take Him, and hasten to sell Him." Impressed by this dramatic presentation of the subject, Isabella was impelled to sign the decrees which banished the Jews from Spain and led to so much slaughter and persecution. All of this side of Isabella's character causes some expression of surprise perhaps, but it must be remembered that her religious zeal and enthusiasm were such that anyone who dared to oppose the power of Rome in any way could have no claim upon her of any kind.

This same trait of character is everywhere prominent in Isabella's treatment of the Moors. In the year 1487 the important Moorish city of Malaga was compelled finally to surrender to the armies of Fernando and Isabella after

a most heroic defence, but these Christian rulers could feel no pity for their unfortunate captives, and were unwilling to show any sense of appreciation of their valor. Accordingly, the whole population of some fifteen thousand people was sold into slavery and scattered throughout Europe! Prescott, in his history of the time of Fernando and Isabella, states that the clergy in the Spanish camp wanted to have the whole population put to the sword, but to this Isabella would not consent. Burke gives the following details with regard to the fate of all these prisoners of war: "A hundred choice warriors were sent as a gift to the pope. Fifty of the most beautiful girls were presented to the Queen of Naples, thirty more to the Queen of Portugal, others to the ladies of her court, and the residue of both sexes were portioned off among the nobles, the knights, and the common soldiers of the army, according to their rank and influence." If Isabella showed herself tender-hearted in not allowing a regular massacre of these poor Moors, she was far less compassionate with regard to the Jews and the renegade Christians who were within the walls of Malaga when the city was taken. These poor unfortunates were burned at the stake, and Albarca, a contemporary Church historian, in describing the scene, says that these awful fires were "illuminations most grateful to the Catholic piety of Fernando and Isabella."

Isabella shows this same general mental temper in her whole attitude to war and warlike deeds, for she seems to have possessed little of that real sentiment or pity which women are supposed to show. Tolstoi has said that the first and chief thing that should be looked for in a woman is fear, but this remark cannot be applied in any way to Isabella, for no fear was ever found in her. In the camp at Granada, in those last days of struggle, the queen appeared on the field daily, superbly mounted, and dressed

in complete armor; and she gave much time to the inspection of the quarters of the soldiers and reviewed the troops at her pleasure. One day she said, in talking to some of her officers, that she would like to go nearer to the city walls for a closer inspection of the place, whereupon a small escort of chosen men was immediately detailed to take the queen to a better point for observing the city and its means of defence. They all advanced boldly, the queen in the front rank, and so angered the Moors by their insolence, so small was their party, that the gates of the city suddenly opened and a large body of citizens came forth to punish them for their temerity. In spite of the unequal numbers, the Christian knights, inspired by the presence and the coolness of their queen, who was apparently unmoved by the whole scene, performed such miracles of valor that two thousand Moors were slain in a short time and their fellows compelled to retire in confusion.

With the conquest of the Moors, the spreading of the influence of Spain beyond the seas became a more immediate question. Its solution, however, was still prevented by the theories of statesmen and theologians. Columbus had won the queen to his cause during the famous audience at the summer court at Salamanca, when he was presented to the sovereigns by Cardinal de Mendoza, at which interview, we are told, he "had no eyes for any potentate but Isabella." But after years of disappointment to Columbus, the queen was again the great power to further his project: she offered to pledge her crown jewels to defray the cost of the expedition. Thus a speedy issue was obtained, and to Isabella's determination Spain owes a glory which gilds the reign of this queen with imperishable lustre.

Chapter XVIII

The Women of the Sixteenth Century

XVIII

THE WOMEN OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

THE wealth which had come to Spain as the result of her conquests in Moorish territory, and, far more, the treasure which was beginning to pour into the country from the new Spanish possessions beyond the seas, brought to the old peninsula a possibility for lavish and brilliant display in dress which was by no means disregarded. All Europe, in this same period of the Renaissance, had been undergoing to a greater or less degree this social transformation, but the looms of Valencia and Granada furnished the silks and brocades which other countries bought with eagerness, and Spain may be considered very properly as the home of all this courtly show. The wonderful gold cloths which were woven by the deft fingers of the Moriscoes were everywhere prized by fine ladies and ardent churchmen, for there was no finer material for a fetching robe of state in all the world, and no altar cloth or priestly robe could possess excelling beauty and not owe a debt to Spain. Someone has said that women are compounds of plain-sewing and make-believe, daughters of Sham and Hem, and, without questioning the truth of the statement, the same remark might be applied to both the clergy and the women of this period at least, if "fine-sewing" be substituted for "plain-sewing" in the epigram. Isabella herself, in spite of her well-known serious character, dressed in a way which was magnificent

beyond belief, and the smallest provincial court was a marvel of brave array. Never had the women adorned themselves so splendidly before, the fashions were made and followed with much scrupulous precision, and so great was the sum of money expended by people of all classes, high and low, that the far-seeing and prudent began to fear the consequences. It is said that on more than one occasion the Cortes deplored the prevalent extravagance and the foolish pride which made even the laboring classes vie in richness of dress with the nobility, "whereby they not only squander their own estate, but bring poverty and want to all." When, however, Fernando and Isabella discovered that gold was being used in large amounts in the weaving of these costly tissues, they issued an order which not only prohibited the wearing of this finery, but inflicted heavy penalties upon all those who should import, sell, or manufacture any textures containing gold or silver threads!

While Her Most Catholic Majesty was issuing edicts of this kind relating to the material affairs of life, it must not be supposed that she was in any way neglecting the humanities, for the truth is quite the contrary. Never before had such encouragement been given to learning by a Spanish sovereign, and never before had there been so little jealousy of foreigners in the matter of scholarship. Isabella was the leader in this broad movement, and from all parts of Europe she summoned distinguished men in science and literature, who were installed at her court in positions of honor or were given chairs in the universities. The final expulsion of the Moors had brought about an era of peace and quiet which was much needed, as Spain had been rent by so much warfare and domestic strife, and for so many years, that the more solid attainments in literature had been much neglected, and the

Spanish nobles were covered with but a polite veneer of worldly information and knowledge which too often cracked and showed the rough beneath. Isabella endeavored to change this state of affairs, and by her own studies, and by her manifest interest in the work of the schools, she soon succeeded in placing learning in a position of high esteem, even among the nobles, who did not need it for their advancement in the world. Paul Jove wrote: "No Spaniard was accounted noble who was indifferent to learning;" and so great was the queen's influence, that more than one scion of a noble house was glad to enter upon a scholarly career and hold a university appointment. It may well be imagined that in all this new intellectual movement which was stimulated by Isabella, it was the sober side of literature and of scholarship which was encouraged, as a light and vain thing such as lyric poetry would have been as much out of place in the court of the firm defender of the Catholic faith as the traditional bull in the traditional china shop. Isabella, under priestly influences, favored and furthered the revival of interest in the study of Greek and Latin, and it is in this realm of classical study that the scholars of the time were celebrated.

The power of example is a wonderful thing always, and in the present instance the direct results of Isabella's interest in education may be seen in the fact that many of the women of her day began to show an unusual interest in schools and books. The opportunities for an education were not limited to the members of the sterner sex, and it appears that both men and women were eager to take advantage of the many new opportunities which were afforded them at this epoch. A certain Doña Beatriz de Galindo was considered the greatest Latin scholar among the women of her time, and for several years her praises were sounded in all the

universities. Finally, Doña Beatriz was appointed special teacher in the Latin language to the queen herself; and so great was her success with this royal pupil, that she was rewarded with the title *la Latina,* by which she was commonly known ever after. According to a Spanish proverb, "the best counsel is that of a woman," and surely Isabella acted upon that supposition. This is not all, however, for not only was a woman called to give lessons to the queen, but women were intrusted with important university positions, which they filled with no small credit to themselves. Good Dr. Holmes has said: "Our ice-eyed brain-women are really admirable if we only ask of them just what they can give and no more," but the bluestockings of Isabella's day were by no means ice-eyed or limited in their accomplishments, and they managed to combine a rare grace and beauty of the dark southern type with a scholarship which was most unusual, all things taken into consideration. Doña Francisca de Lebrija, a daughter of the great Andalusian humanist Antonio de Lebrija, followed her father's courses in the universities of Seville, Salamanca, and Alcala, and finally, in recognition of her great talents, she was invited to lecture upon rhetoric before the Alcala students. At Salamanca, too, there was a liberal spirit shown toward women, and there it was that Doña Lucia de Medrano delivered a course of most learned lectures upon classical Latinity. These are merely the more illustrious among the learned women of the time, and must not be considered as the only cases on record. Educational standards for the majority of both men and women were not high, as a matter of course, and, from the very nature of things, there were more learned men than learned women; but the fact remains that Isabella's position in the whole matter, her desire to learn and her desire to give other women the same opportunity and the same

desire, did much to encourage an ambition of this kind among the wives and daughters of Spain. The queen was a conspicuous incarnation of woman's possibilities, and her enlightened views did much to broaden the feminine horizon. Where she led the way others dared to follow, and the net result was a distinct advance in national culture.

In spite of all this intellectual advance, the game of politics was still being played, and women were still, in more than one instance, the unhappy pawns upon the board who were sacrificed from time to time in the interest of some important move. The success of Spanish unity had aroused Spanish ambition, Fernando and Isabella had arranged political marriages for their children, and the sixteenth century was to show that, in one instance at least, this practical and utilitarian view of the marriage relation brought untold misery and hardship to one poor Spanish princess. In each case the royal alliances which were contracted by the Spanish rulers for their various children were the subject of much careful planning and negotiation, and yet, in spite of it all, these measures constitute the most conspicuous failure in all their long reign. Particularly pathetic and distressing is the story of the poor Princess Juana, whose prospects were most brilliant and whose destiny was most cruel. Juana was married in 1496 to the Archduke Philip of Austria, Governor of the Netherlands and heir to the great domain of his father, the Emperor Maximilian, and the wedding had been celebrated in a most gorgeous fashion. It was in the month of August that a splendid Spanish fleet set out from Laredo, a little port between Bilbao and Santander, to carry the Spanish maiden to her waiting bridegroom. As is usual in such affairs, the beauty of the girl had been much extolled, and the archduke, then in his eighteenth year, was all aglow with hope and expectation. Watchmen had been

posted to keep a lookout for the ships from Spain, and when they finally came in sight with their glistening white sails and their masts and spars all gay with flags and streamers, salutes were fired and they received a royal welcome. The Spanish admiral in person led the Princess Juana to meet her affianced husband, and soon after, in the great cathedral at Lille, the two young people were married in the midst of great festivities. It seems almost pitiful to think of the human side of all this great and glittering show. Juana was barely seventeen years of age, alone, without mother or father or sister or brother, in a strange land, in the midst of a strange court, where all about her were speaking a strange language, and the wife of a youth whom she had never seen until the eve of her marriage! For a few long weeks Juana was somewhat reserved in her new surroundings, and in her heart she longed again for Spain; but as the days passed she became accustomed to her new home, took pleasure in the greater liberty which was now accorded her as a married woman, and soon, neglected by her parents, so far as any show of affection was concerned, she learned to grow indifferent to them and to all their interests. By the year 1500, however, Juana had become a most important person, as death had claimed her brother and her older sisters and she now remained the rightful heir not only to Aragon, but to her mother's realm of Castile as well. This fact caused much uneasiness in Spain, as such an outcome was most unexpected. Secret agents who had been sent to Flanders to inquire into the political and religious views of the archduchess brought back most discouraging reports. It was asserted that she was no longer a careful Catholic, that she "had little or no devotion," and that she was "in the hands of worthless clerics from Paris." As a matter of fact, Juana, once freed from the

ecclesiastical restraints which had been imposed upon her in her younger days by her pious mother, did what it was most natural for her to do,—she went to the opposite extreme. Spain, at that time, with its Inquisition and its fervid zeal for Rome, was the most religious country in Europe, while in the Netherlands there was a growing liberal spirit which attracted the archduchess. It must have been annoying to her to feel that her mother, Isabella, was in a constant fret about the condition of her soul, while otherwise she was treated with a distant formality, entirely devoid of a mother's love, and it is no small wonder that she refused to accept a spiritual director and father confessor who had been sent from Spain to save her from perdition.

With all these facts in mind, Isabella was greatly troubled, for the thought that the indifferent Juana might some day reign in her stead and undo all that she had done with so much labor for the glory of the Church was naturally repugnant to her devout nature. Finally, after a son was born to Juana, Charles, who was to become at a later day the Emperor Charles V., the queen decided upon a somewhat doubtful procedure to avert, for a time at least, the impending catastrophe. The Cortes, under royal pressure, was induced to provide for the government after Isabella's death, in case Juana might be absent from the kingdom, or in case of her "being present in Castile, but unwilling or unable to reign." Under any or all of those circumstances, it was provided that Fernando should act as regent until her son Charles had reached his twentieth year, a rather unusual age, at a time when young princes were frequently declared to have attained their majority at fifteen or sixteen. Isabella's intention in all this was too obvious, for it was plainly a part of her plan that Juana should never have any share in the government of

the country of which she was the rightful heir. The whole transaction smacks strongly of duplicity of the worst kind, for at the very time that the Cortes was being prevailed upon to do this, Juana was being given a royal welcome in both Aragon and Castile, for she had been induced to come home for a visit; and she was even being given public recognition as the future queen of these two countries. There were feasts and tournaments given in her honor, Fernando and Isabella introduced her to their subjects with apparent pleasure, and yet under it all was this heartless trick which they had planned in utter defiance of the law. Still, the law in Spain at this time was almost synonymous with the wish of the sovereign; and so powerful was Isabella and so great was her influence with her legislative body, that there was little dissent to the plan for usurpation which had its origin in her fertile brain. The reasons for this action will never be definitely known, perhaps. It would hardly seem that Juana's lukewarm Catholicism would be sufficient to warrant so radical a step, and it is difficult to give credence to the vaguely circulated rumor that Juana was insane.

Whether this alleged insanity was real or not, it served as a pretext for the action taken, and the report regarding the unhappy princess was soon common property. When Isabella drew her last breath in 1504, Fernando artfully convoked the Cortes, formally renounced any interest in the succession to the throne of Castile, and caused Juana and Philip to be proclaimed as successors to Isabella and himself. Within two months, however, Juana's claims were completely disregarded, it was officially announced that she was not in her right mind, and Fernando was empowered to take control of the Castilian government and rule as regent, according to the terms of the decree which had been arranged by Isabella some years before,

and was to remain as a *de facto* sovereign until Charles had reached the specified majority. The statements which were made to support the claim as to her insanity were not altogether clear, and to-day at least they do not seem convincing. Her attitude of indifference toward the extreme point of view taken by her mother in regard to religion may have been scandalous, as no doubt it was at that time, but it was hardly evidence of an impaired intellect. During her last visit to Spain before her mother's death, Juana had resisted with violence when she was imprisoned for a time and had not been allowed to go to her husband, and such resistance was quite natural in a high-spirited young woman who was being treated in a high-handed and illegal manner; but because her jailer had been the Bishop of Burgos, and because she had been detained by royal order, her action was considered as a certain indication of mental derangement. Again, it was asserted that on one occasion, soon after Juana's return to Flanders from the place of her imprisonment, she gave unmistakable signs of insanity in the course of a court quarrel. It seems that during her absence a certain lady in waiting at her ducal court had succeeded in winning the favor of Philip, and had received such marked attentions from the archduke that the affair was soon gossiped about in every nook and corner of the palace, from scullery maid to the lord high chamberlain. Juana was given a full account of the whole affair before she had been in the palace twenty-four hours, and it so enraged her that she sought out her rival in her husband's affection, and, after a terrible scene, clipped the golden locks of the fair enchantress so close to her head that, for a time at least, her beauty was marred. This was not dignified action, and it might well have been the act of any angered woman under those circumstances, but in Spain the one terrible word "insanity" was

whispered about and no other explanation could or would be accepted. Her sanity had never been questioned in Flanders, and, in spite of her quick temper and many unreasonable acts, no one had ever thought to fasten this terrible suspicion upon her. The game was worth the candle, however; Isabella had been unwilling to take any chances, and the ambiguous clause, "being present in Castile, but unable or unwilling to reign," gave the hint which Fernando had been only too willing to act upon, and the trumped-up charge of insanity was an easy thing to sustain.

Fernando's assumption of the regency, however, and the action of the Cortes, which virtually disregarded the claims of Juana to the throne, angered her and her husband still more, and they set out by ship for Spain, after some delay, to demand an explanation. Fernando went to meet them at the little village of Villafafila, and there, after an audience with the archduke which took place in the little parish church and which lasted for several hours, it was agreed between them that Juana, "on account of her infirmities and sufferings, which decency forbids to be related," was to be "refused under any circumstances to occupy herself with the affairs of the kingdom," and it was mutually agreed that Juana was to be prevented by force, if necessary, from taking any part in the government of Castile! What happened in that interview no man can ever know exactly, but it certainly appears that the wily Fernando had been able by some trick or mass of false evidence to convince Philip that Juana was really insane, and yet he had been with his wife almost continually for the previous two years and had not thought of her in that light, and Fernando had not even seen his daughter within that same space of time! But then and there the fate of the much-abused princess was definitely decided. Juana, self-willed as she had shown herself to be, was not

a woman of strong character or any great ability, and her husband had so regularly controlled her and bent her to his will that he found little trouble in the present instance in deposing her entirely, that he might rule Castile in her stead. When Philip died suddenly two months after he had assumed the reigns of goverment, Juana was stricken with a great grief, which, it is said, did not at first find the ordinary solace afforded by tears. She refused for a long time to believe him dead; and when there was no longer any doubt of the fact, she became almost violent in her sorrow. She had watched by her husband's bedside during his illness, and was most suspicious of all who had anything to do with her, for she thought, as was probably the case, that Philip had been poisoned, and she feared that the same fate might be reserved for her. In any event, Juana was treated with little or no consideration at this unhappy moment; the Cardinal Ximenes, who had been made grand inquisitor, assumed control of the state until Fernando might be summoned from Naples, whither he had gone; and, all in all, the rightful heir to the throne was utterly despised and disregarded. She was allowed to follow her husband's body to its last resting place, and then, after a brief delay, she went to live at Arcos, where she was well watched and guarded by her jealous father, who feared that some disaffected nobles might seek her out and gain her aid in organizing a revolt against his own government. While in this seclusion, Juana was sought in marriage by several suitors, and among them Henry VII. of England; but all these negotiations came to naught, and in the end she was sent to the fortress of Tordesillas, where she was kept in close confinement until the time of her death.

There is no trustworthy evidence to show that Juana was mad before the death of her husband, and all her eccentricities of manner could well have been accounted

for by her wayward, jealous, and hysterical character, but after her domestic tragedy there is little doubt but that her mind was to some degree unsettled. Naturally nervous, and feeling herself in the absolute power of persons who were hostile to her interests, she became most excitable and suspicious, and may well have lost her reason before her last hour came. The story of her confinement in the old fortress at Tordesillas is enough in itself to show that stronger minds than hers might have given way under that strain. This palace-prison overlooked the river Douro, and was composed of a great hall, which extended across the front of the building, and a number of small, dark, and poorly ventilated rooms at the back. In addition to the jailer, who was responsible for the prisoner, the place was filled with a number of women, whose duty it was to keep a close watch upon Juana and prevent her from making any attempt to escape. The use of the great hall with its view across the river was practically denied to her, she was never allowed to look out of the window under any circumstances, for fear she might appeal to some passer-by for aid, and, in general, unless she was under especial surveillance, she was confined, day in and day out, in a little back room, a veritable cell, which was without windows, and where her only light came from the rude candles common to that age. Priests were frequent visitors, but, to the end, Juana would have nothing to do with them, and it is even said that on more than one occasion she had to be dragged to the prison chapel when she was ordered to hear mass. No man can tell whether this unhappy woman would have developed a strong, self-reliant character if the course of her life had been other than it was, but, accepting the facts as they stand, there is no more pathetic figure in all the history of Spain than this poor, mistreated Juana la Loca, "the mad Juana,"

and to every diligent student of Spanish history this instance of woman's inhumanity to woman will ever be a blot on the scutcheon of the celebrated Isabella of Castile.

The religious fanaticism which was responsible in part at least for the fate of Juana soon took shape in a modified form as a definite national policy, and the grandson and great-grandson of Isabella, Charles V. and his son, King Philip, showed themselves equally ardent in the defence of the Catholic faith, even if their ardor did not lead them to treat with inhumanity some member of their own family. Spain gloried in this religious leadership, exhausted herself in her efforts to maintain the cause of Rome in the face of the growing force of the Reformation, and not only sent her sons to die upon foreign battlefields, but ruthlessly took the lives of many of her best citizens at home in her despairing efforts to wipe out every trace of heresy. This whole ecclesiastical campaign produced a marked change in the character of the Spanish people; they lost many of their easy-going ways, while retaining their indomitable spirit of national pride, and became stern, vindictive, and bigoted. In the process of this transformation, the women of the country were perhaps in advance of the men in responding to the new influences which were at work upon them. The number of convents increased rapidly, every countryside had its wonder-working nun who could unveil the mysteries of the world while in the power of some ecstatic trance, and women everywhere were the most tireless supporters of the clergy. It was natural that this should be the case, for there was a nervous excitement in the air which was especially effective upon feminine minds, and the Spanish woman in particular was sensitive and impressionable and easily influenced. Among all of the devout women of this age living a conventual life, the most distinguished, beyond any question, was

Teresa de Cepeda, who is perhaps the favorite saint of modern Spain to-day.

Teresa's early life resembled that of any other well-born young girl of her time, although she must have enjoyed rather exceptional educational advantages, as her father was a man of scholarly instincts, who took an interest in his daughter's development and sedulously cultivated her taste for books. When Teresa was born in 1515, the Spanish romances of chivalry and knight-errantry were in the full tide of their popularity; and as soon as the little girl was able to read, she spent many hours over these fascinating tales. Endowed by nature with a very unusual imagination, she was soon so much absorbed in these wonder tales, which were her mother's delight, that she often sat up far into the night to finish the course of some absorbing adventure. At this juncture, her father, fearing that this excitement might be harmful, tried to divert her mind by putting in her way books of pious origin, wherein the various trials and tribulations of the Christian martyrs were described in a most graphic and realistic style. Soon Teresa was even more interested in these stories than in those of a more worldly character, and the glories of martyrdom, which were described as leading to a direct enjoyment of heavenly bliss without any purgatorial delay, made such a profound impression upon her youthful mind that she resolved at the early age of seven to start out in search of a martyr's crown. Prevailing upon her little brother to accompany her in this quest for celestial happiness, she started out for the country of the Moors, deeming that the surest way to attain the desired goal. While this childish enthusiasm was nipped in the bud by the timely intervention of an uncle, who met the two pilgrims trudging along the highway, the idea lost none of its fascination for a time; and the two children immediately began to play at

being hermits in their father's garden, and made donation to all the beggars in the neighborhood of whatever they could find to give away, depriving themselves of many customary pleasures to satisfy their pious zeal. With the lapse of time, however, this morbid sentiment seemed to disappear, and Teresa was much like any other girl in her enjoyment of the innocent pleasures of life. Avila, in Old Castile, was her home, and there she was sent to an Augustinian convent to complete her education, but without any idea that she would eventually adopt a religious life for herself. This convent, indeed, seemed to make little impression upon her, and it was only after a chance visit made to an uncle who was about to enter a monastery, and who entreated her to withdraw from the vanities of the world, that she seems to have gone back with undimmed ardor to her childish notions. In spite of her father's opposition, Teresa, in her eighteenth year, left home one morning and went to install herself at the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation, which was situated in the outskirts of her native city. The lax discipline and somewhat worldly tone of the place proved a great surprise to her, as she had imagined that the odor of sanctity must be all-pervasive in a religious house; but she evidently accommodated herself to the conditions as she found them, for she made no decided protest and gave evidence of no special piety until twenty years after she had formally given up the world. Then, saddened and sobered by her father's death, Teresa began to have wonderful trances, accompanied by visions wherein Christ, crucified, appeared to her time and time again. Although in later times these unusual experiences have been adduced to prove her saintship, at the time of their occurrence they were not looked upon in the same light, and there were many who said that Teresa was possessed of devils. She

was more than half inclined to this view of the case herself, and the eminent religious authorities who were consulted in the matter advised her to scourge herself without mercy, and to exorcise the figures, both celestial and infernal, which continued to appear before her. The strange experiences continued to trouble her, however, in spite of all that she could do, and to the end of her days she was subject to them. Constantly occupied with illusions and hallucinations, she soon became a religious mystic, living apart from the world and yet deeply interested in its spiritual welfare. One of her visions in particular shows into what a state of religious exaltation she could be thrown. She imagined herself a frameless mirror of infinite size, with Christ shining in the middle of it, and the mirror itself, she knew not how, was in Christ!

In the midst of these experiences Teresa began to wonder what she could do for the real advancement of the Church, and her first thought was that there must be reform in the convents if the cause of religion was to prosper. Discouraged by the members of her own convent, who looked upon any reform movement as a reflection upon their own establishment, Teresa was nevertheless encouraged to go on with her work by certain far-seeing ecclesiastics who were able to appreciate its ultimate value. It was her plan to establish a convent wherein all the early and austere regulations of the Carmelite order were to be observed, and, by working secretly, she was able to carry it out. There was violent protest, which almost led to violence, and it was only after full papal approval that she was allowed to go about her business unmolested. The reorganizing spirit of the Counter-Reformation which was now at work within the Catholic Church gave her moral support, and the remaining years of her life were devoted to the work of conventual reorganization and regeneration

which she had begun with so stout a heart. It was her wont to travel everywhere in a little cart which was drawn by a single donkey, and winter and summer she went her way, enduring innumerable hardships and privations, that her work might prosper. Sixteen convents and fourteen monasteries were founded as the result of her efforts; and as her sincerity and single-mindedness became more and more apparent, she was everywhere hailed by the people as a devout and holy woman, and was even worshipped by some as a saint on earth. Disappointment and failure were her lot at times, and she found it difficult to maintain the stern discipline of which she was such an ardent advocate. On one occasion, it is said that her nuns in the convent of Saint Joseph, at Avila, went on a strike and demanded a meat diet, which, it may be added, she refused to grant; and a prioress at Medina answered one of her communications in a very impertinent manner and showed other signs of insubordination; but Teresa was calm and unruffled, in her outward demeanor at least, and found a way by tactful management, and by a judicious show of her authority, to settle all differences and disputes without great difficulty. When death overtook her in 1582, miracles were worked about her tomb, and when the vault was opened, after a period of nine months, it is asserted that her body was uncorrupted. Removed to a last resting place at Avila at a somewhat later date, her bones were finally carried off by pious relic hunters, who believed them to possess miraculous properties. In the forty years which followed her death, Teresa was so revered throughout her native land that she was canonized by Pope Gregory XV. in 1622. To her exalted spirit were joined a firm judgment and a wonderful power of organization, and in placing her among the saints she was given a merited reward for her holy labors.

The harsh intolerance which came with the Spanish Counter-Reformation manifested itself oftentimes in acts of cruelty and oppression which are almost beyond belief. So eager were the zealots for the triumph of pure and unadulterated Catholicism, that no consideration whatever was shown for the Moriscoes, or Spanish Moors, whose form of belief was Catholic, but tinged with Moslem usages, and even women and children were made to suffer the unreasoning persecution of the Christians. One offensive measure after another was adopted for the discomfiture of the thrifty sons of the Prophet, and finally, with the purpose of wiping out all distinctions of any kind which might lead to a retention of national characteristics, it was decreed in 1567 that no woman should walk abroad with a covered face. Such a measure was certainly short-sighted. For hundreds of years this Oriental custom had been common in southern Spain; it was significant of much of their idea of social order and decency, and any attempt to abolish it with a single stroke of a Catholic pen was both unwise and imprudent. According to Hume, "this practice had taken such a firm hold of the people of the south of Spain that traces of it remain to the present day in Andalusia, where the women of the poorer classes constantly cover the lower part of the face with the corner of a shawl. In Peru and Chili (originally colonized by the Spanish) the custom is even more universal." Yet it was this firmly rooted habit that the Christians tried to destroy! As the result of this order, the majority of the Spanish women showed themselves in public as rarely as possible, and then they tried to evade the law whenever they could. Other measures, equally severe and equally impossible, which were enacted at the same time, ended finally, as might have been expected, in a desperate revolt. A horde of Moslem fanatics, goaded to desperation, swept down

upon the Christians of Granada, and there was a terrible massacre. This was all that was necessary to start the Spaniards upon a campaign which was still more cruel than any which had preceded it, for now the avowed object was revenge and not war. Six thousand helpless women and children were slaughtered in a single day by the Marquis de los Velez, and this is but a single instance of the bloodthirsty spirit which was rampant at the time.

Even among the Spanish people, the officers of the Inquisition found many victims, and women quite as often as men had to endure its rigors. In spite of the many centuries of Christian influence, there were still to be found in various parts of the country remnants of the old pagan worship which were difficult to eradicate. It was claimed that sects were in existence which not only denied the Christian faith, but openly acknowledged the Devil as their patron and promised obedience to him! In the ceremonies attendant upon this worship of the powers of darkness, women played no unimportant part, and many were the reputed witches who were supposed to be on terms of intimate acquaintance with the arch-fiend in person. As the suppression of this heresy was assumed by the Church, the Inquisition, as its punitive organ, took charge of the matter and showed little mercy in its dealings with suspected persons, for whom the rack and other instruments of torture were put to frequent use. In the year 1507 the Inquisition of Calahorra burned more than thirty women as sorceresses and magicians, and twenty years later, in Navarre, there were similar condemnations. So frequent, indeed, were these arrests for magic and sorcery, that the "sect of sorcerers," as it was called, seemed to be making great headway throughout the whole country, and the Inquisition called upon all good Christians to lodge information with the proper authorities whenever they "heard

that any person had familiar spirits, and that he invoked demons in circles, questioning them and expecting their answer, as a magician, or in virtue of an express or tacit compact." It was also their duty to report anyone who "constructed or procured mirrors, rings, phials, or other vessels for the purpose of attracting, enclosing, and preserving a demon, who replies to his questions and assists him in obtaining his wishes; or who had endeavored to discover the future by interrogating demons in possessed people; or tried to produce the same effect by invoking the devil under the name of *holy angel* or *white angel,* and by asking things of him with prayers and humility, by practising other superstitious ceremonies with vases, phials of water, or consecrated tapers; by the inspection of the nails, and of the palm of the hand rubbed with vinegar, or by endeavoring to obtain representations of objects by means of phantoms in order to learn secret things or which had not then happened." Such orders led to the arrest of hundreds of women all over Spain, and many of them went to death in the flames, for women rather than men were affected by this crusade, as they were generally the adepts in these matters of the black art. That such things could be in Spain at this time may cause some surprise, but it must be remembered that superstition dies hard and that many of the things which are here condemned are still advertised in the columns of the newspapers, and the belief in the supernatural seems to have taken a new lease of life as the result of certain modern investigations. Superstition has ever gone hand in hand with civilization, in spite of the repeated efforts of the latter to go its way alone.

Witches and sorceresses, however, were far outnumbered in the prisons of the Inquisition by the numerous Spanish women who were accused of Lutheranism, for the reformed doctrines had succeeded in making great progress

even here in this hotbed of popery, and many persons were burned for their lack of faith in the old formulas of belief. An *auto de fé* was a great public holiday, celebrated in some large open square, which had been especially prepared for the event, with tiers upon tiers of seats arranged on every side for the accommodation of the thousands of spectators; and to this inspiring performance came many noble ladies, decked out as if for a bull fight, and eager to witness each act of atrocity in its slightest detail. The names of scores of the women who perished in this way might be cited to show that from all classes the Church was claiming its victims; and even after death, condemnation might come and punishment might be inflicted. To illustrate the possibilities of this religious fury, the case of Doña Eleanora de Vibero will more than suffice. She had been buried at Valladolid, without any doubt as to her orthodoxy, but she was later accused of Lutheranism by a treasurer of the Inquisition, who said that she had concealed her opinions by receiving the sacraments and the Eucharist at the time of her death. His charges were supported by the testimony of several witnesses, who had been tortured or threatened; and the result of it all was that her memory and her posterity were condemned to infamy, her property was confiscated, and at the first solemn *auto de fé* of Valladolid, held in 1559, and attended by the Prince Don Carlos and the Princess Juana, her disinterred body was burned with her effigy, her house was razed to the ground, and a monument with an inscription relating to this event was placed upon the spot.

Such is this sixteenth century in Spain, an age of strange contrasts, where the greatest crimes are committed in the holy name of Religion!

Chapter XIX

The Slow Decay of Spanish Power

XIX

THE SLOW DECAY OF SPANISH POWER

WHEN the long and unfortunate reign of Philip the Catholic came to an end on the eve of the seventeenth century, Spain, sadly buffeted by the rough waves of an adverse fortune, was in a most pitiful condition. With the downfall of the great Armada which was so confidently destined to humble the pride of England, national confidence had begun to slip away, the wars at home and in the Netherlands had sadly depleted the treasury, the credit of the country was far from good, and gradually, as a natural reaction after the religious exaltation which had marked the whole of the sixteenth century, a spirit of irreligion and licentiousness became prevalent in all classes of society. As Philip had grown older and more ascetic in his tastes, he had gradually withdrawn from society and had left his court to its own devices. With his death, in 1598, the last restraint was gone, and there was no limit to the excesses of the insensate nation. Having failed in their great and zealous effort to fasten Spanish Catholicism upon the whole of Europe, they had finally accepted a milder philosophy, and had decided to enjoy the present rather than continue to labor for a somewhat doubtful reward in the life which was to come. The young king, Philip III., who began to reign under these circumstances, was wedded in 1599 to the Archduchess Margaret of Austria, and the feasts and celebrations which were organized

in honor of this event outrivalled in their magnificence anything of the kind that had taken place in Spain for many years, and there was a free and libertine spirit about all of this merrymaking which did not augur well for the future. The Duke of Lerma, the king's favorite and prime minister, was in full charge of the affair, and he spared no pains in his desire to make a brave show, in spite of the critical financial condition of the country. The young Austrian princess, upon her arrival at Madrid, was fairly dazzled by the reception she was given; and well she may have been, for the money expended for this purpose reaches proportions which almost surpass belief. The Cortes appropriated one million ducats for the occasion, and the nobles spent three million more, three hundred thousand of this sum having been contributed by Lerma from his own private revenues.

The Spanish court now changed its character completely, and the sombre simplicity of the elder Philip's day gave place to a gayety and brilliant ceremonial which were more in accord with the new spirit of the times. Lerma filled the palace at Madrid with brilliant ladies in waiting, for he believed, with the gallant Francis I. of France, that a royal court without women is like a year without spring, a spring without flowers; and a marvellous round of pleasures began, all governed by a stately etiquette. But this gay life was rotten at the core; the immodest and shameless conduct of the women in particular shocked and surprised all visiting foreigners; and as time went on, the social evil increased and became more widespread. Virtue in women was a subject for jest, the cities were perfect sinks of iniquity, to quote Hume, and, in Madrid in particular, immorality was so common among the women that the fact passed into a proverbial saying. Homer has said: "Than woman there is no fouler and viler fiend when her

mind is bent on ill;" and even were the superlatives to be lopped from this expression, it might still help to express the fact that the moral degeneracy of Spain in her new career of wantonness was at least shared by the women. At the court, the king, who was in many ways what might be termed a mystic voluptuary, spent his time in alternate fits of dissipation and devotion, wasted his time in gallantry, and neglected his royal duties; and the all-powerful Lerma was the centre of a world of graft, where the highest offices in the land were bartered for gold, and every noble had an itching palm. In this scene of disorder women played no little part, and through intrigue and cajolery they often won the day for their favored lovers. Religion gave place to recklessness, valor disappeared in vanity, and a splendid idleness replaced a splendid industry. One Cortes after another protested, measures were adopted which sought to bring the nation to its senses, new sumptuary laws were enacted, but all to no avail; for the nobility continued to set an example of glittering prodigality, and the common people were not slow to follow.

When another Philip, the fourth of this name, came to the throne in 1621, the situation was almost hopeless. The country was involved in the Thirty Years' War, one failure after another befell the Spanish arms, the taxes had become unbearable, and in many quarters revolt was threatened. The king was not equal to his task, government was an irksome duty for him, and he found his greatest pleasure in two things, hunting and the theatre. Madrid at this time was theatre-mad, playhouses were numerous, and the people thronged them every night. The ladies of the nobility had their special boxes, which were their own private property, furnished in a lavish way, and there every evening they held their little court and dispensed favors to their many admirers. It was the

first time in the history of the theatre that women's rôles were being played quite generally by women, and, as was most natural, certain actresses soon sprang into popular favor and vied with each other for the plaudits of the multitude. In theory the stage was frowned at by the Church, the plays were very often coarse and licentious in character, and the moral influence of this source of popular amusement was decidedly bad; but the tinsel queens of that age, as in the present time, were invested with a glamour which had an all-compelling charm, and noble protectors were never wanting. Among the actresses of notoriety in this Spanish carnival of life, the most celebrated were Maria Riquelme, Francisca Beson, Josefa Vaca, and Maria Calderon, familiarly known to the theatre-goers as *la bella Calderona*. Philip IV., as much infatuated as the meanest of his subjects by the glitter of the footlights, never lost an opportunity when at his capital to spend his evenings in the royal box, where he showed his appreciation by most generous applause; and he was soon on familiar terms with many of the reigning favorites. Among them all, La Calderona seemed to please him most, and she was soon the recipient of so many royal favors that no one could doubt her conquest. Other lovers were discarded, she became Philip's mistress, and she it was who bore to him a son, the celebrated Don Juan, who became in later years a leader in revolt against his father's widowed queen.

In the midst of this troubled life, divided between the pleasures of the chase, the excitements of the theatre, and the many vexations of state, Philip was reserved in his dealings with his fellow men, and few fathomed the depth of his despair in the face of the approaching national ruin. One person seemed to have read the sadness of his heart, however, and that person, with whom he had a most extended correspondence, was, strange to relate, a woman, and a

nun of the most devout type, Sister Maria de Agreda! The history of this woman is most interesting, and she seems to have been the one serious and restraining element in all that scene of gay riot. The Agreda family, belonging to the lesser nobility, lived on the frontiers of Aragon, and there, in their city of Agreda, they had founded in 1619 a convent, following a pretended revelation which had directed them to this holy undertaking. The year after the convent was completed, Maria de Agreda, who was then eighteen, and her mother, took the veil at the same time and retired from the vanity of the world. In seven years the young girl was made the mother superior of the institution, and, beginning from that date, she was subject to frequent visions of a most surprising character. God and the Virgin appeared to her repeatedly, commanding her each time to write the life of Mary; but in spite of these supernatural admonitions, she resisted for ten long years, fearing that she might be possessed of demons who came in celestial shape to urge her to a work which she felt to be beyond her powers. Finally, impressed by the persistence of these holy visitants, she referred the matter to a priest who had long been her father confessor, and at his suggestion she decided to write as she had been commanded. For some months she busied herself with this task, and then one day, in an unlucky moment, she ventured to confide her plans to another monk, in the absence of her regular spiritual adviser. This time her plans of literary work were discouraged, and she was advised to burn her manuscripts as worthless paper and to content herself with the usual routine of conventual life. Following this advice, she destroyed the fruits of her labor, and prepared to resume her interrupted duties, when, to her consternation, God and the Virgin again appeared in her cell at night and again commanded her to write as before.

Again she resisted, and again the vision came, and finally, encouraged by her old confessor, who had returned upon the scene, she began anew the once abandoned work. This time there was no interruption; the book was finished, and printed first in Madrid, and then at Lisbon, Perpignan, and Antwerp. Naturally, the claim was made that the book was written under divine inspiration, and the curious and oftentimes revolting details with which its pages were filled were soon the talk and scandal of the religious world. Maria, in spite of her mysticism, had proved to be a realist of the most pronounced type, and in many quarters her book was openly denounced. In Paris, the great court preacher Bossuet proclaimed it immoral; and the Sorbonne, which was then a faculty of theologians, condemned the book to be burned. Although the facts are not clearly known, it must have been during this time of publicity that the nun was brought to the attention of the world-weary king. He was attracted by her professed visions, he sought for consolation of a spiritual character in the midst of his unhappy career, and there resulted this correspondence between the two, which has since been published. To quote Hume, it was "the nun Maria de Agreda who, alone of all his fellow-creatures, could sound the misery of Philip's soul as we can do who are privileged to read the secret correspondence between them." Pleasures of all sorts were beginning to pall now upon the jaded monarch. Court festivities became a hollow mockery, the glitter of the stage had vanished, only to leave its queens all daubed with paint and powder in the garish light of reality, and the broken-hearted Philip, bereft of wife and heir, was induced to marry for a second time, in the hope that another son might come to inherit his throne.

Philip's second wife was his niece Mariana, another Austrian archduchess, but this marriage was a vain hope

so far as his earthly happiness was concerned. The wished-for son was born, and duly christened Charles, but he was ever a weakling; and when the father died in 1665, preceding Maria de Agreda to the tomb by a few months only, the government was left in charge of Mariana as regent, and all Spain was soon in a turmoil as the result of the countless intrigues which were now being begun by foreign powers who hoped to dominate the peninsula. Mariana, who was a most ardent partisan, began to scheme for her Austrian house as soon as she arrived in Spain, and did everything in her power to counteract the French alliance which had been favored by Philip. Upon her husband's death, she promptly installed her German confessor, Nithard, as inquisitor-general, gave him a place in the Council of State, and in all things made him her personal representative. Her whole course of action was so hostile to the real interests of Spain, that murmurs of discontent were soon heard among the people; and Don Juan, the illegitimate son, won power and popularity for himself by espousing the cause of the nation. The weakling boy-king Charles was a degenerate of the worst type, the result of a long series of intermarriages; and so long as Mariana could keep him within her own control, it was difficult to question her authority to do as she pleased. For greater protection to herself and to her own interests, Mariana had installed about her in her palace a strong guard of foreigners, who attended her when she went abroad and held her gates against all unfriendly visitors when she was at home. But the opposition grew, and finally, after some ill-timed measures of Nithard, there was open revolt, and Don Juan appeared at the head of a body of troops to demand in the name of outraged Spain the immediate dismissal of the queen's favorite. Mariana's confusion at this juncture of affairs has been quaintly

pictured by Archdeacon Coxe, who wrote an interesting history of the Bourbon kings of Spain in the early part of the last century: "In the agony of indignation and despair, the queen threw herself upon the ground and bewailed her situation. 'Alas, alas!' she cried; 'what does it avail me to be a Queen and Regent, if I am deprived of this good man who is my only consolation? The meanest individual is permitted to chuse (*sic*) a confessor: yet I am the only persecuted person in the kingdom!'" Tears were unavailing, however, and Nithard had to leave in disgrace, although Mariana was successful in opposing Don Juan's claim to a share in the government. But the queen could not rule alone, and the new favorite, as was quite usual in such cases, owed his position to feminine wiles. Valenzuela, a gentleman of Granada, had been one of Nithard's trusted agents, and courted assiduously Doña Eugenia, one of the ladies in waiting to the queen; and by marrying her he had brought himself to Mariana's notice, and had so completely gained her confidence, that she naturally looked to him for support. Either the queen's virtue was a very fragile thing, or Valenzuela was considered a gallant most irresistible; for in his first two interviews with Her Majesty, his wife, Doña Eugenia, was present, "to avoid scandal." It is probably safe to say that as Valenzuela rose in power this precaution was thrown to the winds, and on more than one occasion "he made an ostentatious display of his high favor, affected the airs of a successful lover, as well as of a prime minister; and it did not escape notice that his usual device in tournaments was an eagle gazing at the sun, with the motto *Tengo solo licencia,* 'I alone have permission.'"

This pride had its fall, however, as in 1677 the boy-king Charles, at the age of fifteen, which had been fixed as his majority, was made to see that his mother was working

against the best interests of his subjects; and he escaped from the honorable captivity in which he had been held at the palace, and gave himself up to his half-brother, Don Juan, who was only too ready to seize this advantage against the hostile queen. Mariana was imprisoned in a convent in Toledo, Valenzuela was exiled to the Philippines, and Don Juan, as prime minister, prepared to restore public confidence. In line with his former policy, he made a clean sweep of all the members of the Austrian party, and then began to prepare the way for a French marriage, to strengthen the friendly feeling of the powerful Louis XIV., who had been married to a Spanish wife. Scarcely had the promise for this marriage between Louis's niece Marie Louise and the half-witted Charles been made, when, suddenly, Don Juan sickened and died, and the queen-mother Mariana was again in power. There were dark hints of poison; it was insinuated that Mariana knew more of the affair than she would be willing to reveal; but, whatever the facts, there was no proof, and there was no opportunity for accusations. Meanwhile, the preparations for the royal wedding were continued, in spite of the fact that it was feared that Mariana might try to break the agreement. But this wily woman, confident in her own powers, felt sure that she would prove more than a match for this young French queen who was coming as a sacrifice to enslave Spain to France. Marie Louise had left her home under protest, strange tales of this idiot prince who was to be her husband had come to her ears, and she could only look forward to her marriage with feelings of loathing and disgust. As all her appeals had been to no avail, she discarded prudence from her category of virtues, and entered the Spanish capital a thoughtless, reckless woman, fully determined to follow her own inclinations, without regard to the consequences. Her beauty made an

immediate impression upon the feeble mind of her consort; but she spurned his advances, made a jest of his pathetic passion for her, and was soon deep in a life of dissipation. Mariana, as the older woman, might have checked this impulsive nature; but she aided rather than hindered the downfall of the little queen, looked with but feigned disapproval upon the men who sought her facile favors, and, after a swift decade, saw her die, without a murmur of regret. Again there were whispers of poison, but Mariana was still in power, and she lost no time in planning again for Austrian ascendency and an Austrian succession. Once more the puppet king was accepted as a husband, and this time by the Princess Anne of Neuburg, a daughter of the elector-palatine, and sister of the empress, though, in justice to Anne, it should be said that she was an unwilling bride and merely came as Marie Louise had done—a sacrifice to political ambition. Victor Hugo, in his remarkable drama *Ruy Blas,* gives a striking picture of this epoch in Spanish history, and shows the terrible ennui felt by Anne in the midst of the rigid etiquette of Madrid. In one of the scenes in this play, a letter is brought to the queen from King Charles, who is now spending almost all his time on his country estates, hunting; and after the epistle has been duly opened and read aloud by the first lady in waiting, it is found to contain the following inspiring words: "Madame, the wind is high, and I have killed six wolves"!

The new queen, however, was soon interested by the indefatigable Mariana in the absorbing game of politics which she had been playing for so long a time and in which she was such an adept; and before many months had passed, the two women were working well together for the interests of their dear Austria, for their sympathies were identical and there was nothing to prevent harmonious action between them. Anne brought in her train an

energetic woman, Madame Berlips, who was her favorite adviser, and for a time these three feminine minds were the controlling forces in the government. France was not sleeping, however; skilful diplomatic agents were at work under the general supervision of the crafty Louis Quatorze, and the matter of the succession was for a long time in doubt. Without an heir, Charles was forced to nominate his successor; and the wording of his will, the all-important document in the case, was never certain until death came and the papers were given an official reading. Then it was discovered, to the chagrin of the zealous Austrian trio, that they had been outwitted, and that the grandson of Louis, young Philip of Anjou, had won the much-sought prize. With the coming of the new king, the women of the Austrian party and all their followers were banished from the court, and a new era began for Spain. The French policy which had worked such wonders in the seventeenth century was now applied to this foreign country, numerous abuses were corrected, and foremost in the new régime was a woman, the Princess Orsini, who was soon the real Queen of Spain to all intents and purposes. Feminine tact and diplomacy had long been held in high esteem in France; Louis had been for many years under the influence of the grave Madame de Maintenon; and this influence had been so salutary in every way, that the aged monarch could think of no better adviser for his youthful grandson, in his new and responsible position, than some other woman, equally gifted, who might guide him safely through the political shoals which were threatening him at every turn. Madame de Maintenon was called upon for her advice in this crisis, and she it was who suggested the Princess Orsini as the one woman in all Europe who could be trusted to guide the young Philip V. It is interesting to note that there was never question for

a moment of placing a man in this post of confidence; its dangers and responsibilities were acknowledged as too heavy for a man to shoulder, and it was merely a question of finding the proper woman for the emergency. One other woman was needed, however, in Spain at this time, and that was a wife for the newly crowned king. She was to provide for the future, while the Princess Orsini was to take care of the present.

A political marriage was planned, as might have been expected, and after some delay the fickle Duke of Savoy, who had long been a doubtful friend to the French, was brought to terms, and his daughter Marie Louise was promised as Philip's bride. The ceremony was performed at Turin, where the king was represented by a proxy, the Marquis of Castel Rodrigo, and the royal party left Genoa in a few days, in gayly adorned galleys, bound for the Spanish coast. Philip hastened to meet his bride, and first saw her at Figueras, to the north of Barcelona. There, on October 3, 1701, their union was ratified, in the presence of the "patriarch of the Indies," who happened to be in Spain at that time. All was not clear weather in these first days of the honeymoon, for, at the command of the French king, all of the Piedmontese attendants of the little queen had been dismissed, as it was feared that she might bring evil counsellors who would make trouble for the new government. The Princess Orsini, who had joined the party when they embarked at Genoa, took charge of Marie Louise on the departure of her friends, and did all in her power to make the separation easy for her, but Marie was so indignant at this unexpected turn of affairs that she was in high dudgeon for several days, and during this time, until she had become thoroughly reconciled to her fate, the impatience of the boy-king was restrained and he was forced to consent to a temporary separation.

To quote from Coxe's description: "Marie Louise had scarcely entered her fourteenth year, and appeared still more youthful from the smallness of her stature; but her spirit and understanding partook of the early maturity of her native climate, and to exquisite beauty of person and countenance she united the most captivating manners and graceful deportment." Even after her attendants had been dismissed and the Princess Orsini had been definitely installed as her *camerara-mayor,* or head lady in waiting, with almost unlimited powers, Louis Quatorze still thought it advisable to write to his young protégé and give him some advice relative to his treatment of his wife. Among his sententious remarks, the following are of special interest: "The queen is the first of your subjects, in which quality, as well as in that of your wife, she is bound to obey you. You are bound to love her, but you will never love her as you ought if her tears have any power to extort from you indulgences derogatory to your glory. Be firm, then, at first. I well know that the first refusals will grieve you, and are repugnant to your natural mildness; but fear not to give a slight uneasiness, to spare real chagrin in the future. By such conduct alone you will prevent disputes which would become insupportable. Shall your domestic dissensions be the subject of conversation for your people and for all Europe? Render the queen happy, if necessary, in spite of herself. Restrain her at first; she will be obliged to you in the end; and this violence over yourself will furnish the most solid proof of your affection for her. . . . Believe that my love for you dictates this advice, which, were I in your place, I should receive from a father as the most convincing proof of his regard."

The Princess Orsini, or Des Ursins, as she is generally known, was a most remarkable woman. A member of the old French family of La Tremouille, she had first

married Adrian Blaise de Talleyrand, Prince de Chalais; and on her husband's banishment as the result of an unfortunate duel, she went with him in exile to Spain, where she spent several years and had an opportunity to become familiar with the language and customs of the country. Going later to Italy, where her husband died, she was soon married a second time, to Flavio de' Orsini, Duke of Bracciano and Grandee of Spain, and for several years was a most conspicuous figure in the court circles of Rome and Versailles, becoming the intimate friend of Madame de Maintenon. Thus it was that Madame de Maintenon spoke of her in connection with the Spanish position as soon as the matter presented itself. The Princess Orsini was nothing loath to accept this position when it was spoken of, and she wrote to the Duchesse de Noailles as follows in soliciting her influence with the French court: "My intention is only to go to Madrid and remain there as long as the king chooses, and afterward to return to Versailles and give an account of my journey. . . . I am the widow of a grandee, and acquainted with the Spanish language; I am beloved and esteemed in the country; I have numerous friends, and particularly the Cardinal Pontocarrero; with these advantages, judge whether I shall not cause both rain and sunshine at Madrid, and whether I shall incur the imputation of vanity in offering my services." Saint-Simon, who knew the princess well, has written in his *Memoirs* the following description of her appearance and character, and it is so lucid in its statement and such an admirable specimen of pen portraiture that it is given in its entirety:

"She was above the middle size, a brunette with expressive blue eyes; and her face, though without pretension to beauty, was uncommonly interesting. She had a fine figure, a majestic and dignified air, rather attractive

than intimidating, and united with such numberless graces, even in trifles, that I have never seen her equal either in person or mind. Flattering, engaging, and discreet, anxious to please for the sake of pleasing, and irresistible when she wished to persuade or conciliate, she had an agreeable tone of voice and manner, and an inexhaustible fund of conversation, which was rendered highly entertaining by accounts of the different countries she had visited, and anecdotes of the distinguished persons whom she had known and frequented. She had been habituated to the best company, was extremely polite and affable to all, yet peculiarly engaging with those whom she wished to distinguish, and equally skilful in displaying her own graces and qualifications. She was adapted by nature for the meridian of courts, and versed in all the intrigues of cabinets from her long residence in Rome, where she maintained a princely establishment. She was vain of her person and fond of admiration, foibles which never left her, and hence her dress in every season of life was too youthful for her age and sometimes even ridiculous. She possessed a simple and natural eloquence, saying always what she chose, and as she chose, and nothing more. Secret with regard to herself; faithful to the confidence of others; gifted with an exterior, nay, an interior, of gayety, good humor, and evenness of temper, which rendered her perfectly mistress of herself at all times and in all circumstances. Never did any woman possess more art without the appearance of art; never was a more fertile head, or superior knowledge of the human heart, and the means of ruling it. She was, however, proud and haughty; hurrying forward directly to her ends, without regard to the means; but still, if possible, clothing them with a mild and plausible exterior. She was nothing by halves; jealous and imperious in her attachments; a

zealous friend, unchangeable by time or absence, and a most implacable and inveterate enemy. Finally, her love of existence was not greater than her love of power; but her ambition was of that towering kind which women seldom feel, and superior even to the ordinary spirit of man."

Such was the woman who was to give tone to the new administration and to aid the young king and queen in the difficult tasks which were before them. Philip was not a decided success, except as a soldier; he yielded much to his wilful wife, and the Princess Orsini was soon accepted by them both as a trustworthy guide. The following extract from a letter written by the French ambassador to his court soon after her installation is significant in her praise: "I see the queen will infallibly govern her husband, and therefore we must be careful that she governs him well. For this object the intervention of the princess is absolutely necessary; her progress is considerable; and we have no other means to influence her royal mistress, who begins to show that she will not be treated as a child." During the fourteen warlike years which followed, and which resulted in the complete submission of all the Spanish provinces to the will of Philip V., Marie Louise was devoted to her husband's cause, and developed a strong character as she grew older; but in 1714, just as quiet had come and the country under the new administrative scheme had begun to win back some of its former thrift and prosperity, death came to her suddenly, and Philip was left alone with the resourceful Orsini, who rarely failed in her undertakings. So complete was her influence over him, that Hume says she "ruled Spain unchecked in his name." With this opportunity before her, and a victim to her strong personal ambition, which exulted in this exercise of power, she now grew jealous of her position

and feared lest a new marriage might depose her. Accordingly, she arranged matters to her liking, and succeeded in having Philip marry Elizabeth Farnese, a princess of Parma, who had been described to her as a meek and humble little body with no mind or will of her own. With a queen of this stamp safely stowed away in the palace, the Princess Orsini saw no limit to her autocratic sway. This time, however, the clever woman of state had been cruelly deceived; for the mild Elizabeth turned out to be a general in her own right, who promptly dismissed her would-be patron from the court and speedily acquired such domination over Philip that he became the mere creature of her will.

This Elizabeth Farnese, in spite of her quiet life at Parma, soon showed herself to possess a capacity for government which no one could have suspected, for she had studied and was far better acquainted with history and politics than the majority of women, spoke several languages, and had an intelligent appreciation of the fine arts. Hume calls her a virago, and, although this is a harsh word, her first encounter with the Princess Orsini would seem to warrant its use. The princess, by virtue of her office of *camerara-mayor,* had gone ahead of the king, to meet the new queen, and the two women met at the little village of Xadraca, four leagues beyond Guadalaxara. The princess knelt and kissed the hand of her new mistress, and then conducted her to the apartments which had been prepared for her. Coxe describes the scene as follows: "The Princess Orsini began to express the usual compliments and to hint at the impatience of the royal bridegroom. But she was thunderstruck when the queen interrupted her with bitter reproaches and affected to consider her dress and deportment as equally disrespectful. A mild apology served only to rouse new fury; the queen haughtily silenced her

remonstrances, and exclaimed to the guard: 'Turn out that mad woman who has dared to insult me.' She even assisted in pushing her out of the apartment. Then she called the officer in waiting, and commanded him to arrest the princess and convey her to the frontier. The officer, hesitating and astonished, represented that the king alone had the power to give such an order. 'Have you not,' she indignantly exclaimed, 'his majesty's order to obey me without reserve?' On his reply in the affirmative, she impatiently rejoined: 'Then obey me.' As he still persisted in requiring a written authority, she called for a pen and ink and wrote the order on her knee."

Whether this incident as related be true or not, it serves well to illustrate the imperious nature which she undoubtedly possessed, and which was seen so many times in the course of the next quarter of a century. Her will had to be obeyed, and nothing could turn her aside from her purpose when once it was fixed. But she was as artful as she was stubborn, and ruled most of the time without seeming to rule, carefully watching all of her husband's states of mind, and leading him gradually, and all unconsciously, to her point of view when it differed from her own. Her interests were largely centred in her attempts to win some of the smaller Italian principalities for her sons, she was continually involved in the European wars of her time, and she again brought Spain into a critical financial condition by her costly and fruitless warfare. Not until the accession of her stepson, Charles III., who came to the throne in 1759, was Spain free from the machinations of this designing woman, and, in all that time of her authority, no one can say that she ruled her country wisely or well. She was short-sighted in her ambition, entirely out of sympathy with the Spanish people, and did little or nothing to deserve their hearty praise. So when

at last her power was gone, and the new king came to his own, there was but one feeling among all the people, and that was a feeling of great relief.

For the rest of this eighteenth century in Spain there is no predominating woman's influence such as there had been for so many years before, as Amelia, the wife of Charles III., died a few months after his accession, and for the rest of his life he remained unmarried and with no feminine influence near him. The morals of Spain did not improve in this time, however, even if the king gave an example of continence which no other monarch for many years had shown. Charles was very strict in such matters, and it is on record that he banished the Dukes of Arcos and Osuna because of their open and shameless amours with certain actresses who were popular in Madrid at that time. The women in question were also sternly punished, and the whole influence of Charles was thus openly thrown in favor of the decencies of life, which had so long been neglected. The sum total of his efforts was nevertheless powerless to avail much against the inbred corruption of the people, for their none too stable natures were being strongly influenced at that time by the echo of French liberalism which was now sounding across the Pyrenees, and restraint of any kind was becoming more and more irksome every day. Charles IV., who ascended the throne in 1788, was weak and timid and completely in the power of his wife, Marie Louise of Parma, a wilful woman of little character, who was responsible for much of the humiliation which came to Spain during the days of Napoleon's supremacy. Charles IV., realizing his own lack of ability in affairs of state, had decided to take a prime minister from the ranks of the people, that he might be wholly dependent upon his sovereign's will; and his choice fell upon a certain handsome Manuel Godoy, a

member of the bodyguard of the king, with whom the vapid Marie was madly in love, and whom she had recommended for the position. The king, all unsuspecting, followed this advice, and Godoy, who was wholly incompetent, went from one mistake to another, to the utter detriment of Spanish interests. The queen's relations with her husband's chief of state were well known to all save Charles himself, and, on one occasion at least, Napoleon, by threatening to reveal the whole shameful story to the king, bent Godoy to his will and forced him to humiliating concessions. The queen supported him blindly, however, in every measure, and put her evil pleasure above the national welfare.

It must not be assumed that in this period of national wreckage that all was bad, that all the women were corrupt and all the men were without principle, for there was never perhaps such a condition of affairs in any country; but the prevailing and long-continued licentiousness at the court, which was in many respects a counterpart in miniature of the wanton ways of eighteenth-century France, could not fail in the end to react in a most disastrous way upon the moral nature of the people. There were still pious mothers and daughters, but the moral standards of the time were so deplorably low in a country where they had never been of the highest, from a strictly puritan standpoint, that society in general shows little of that high seriousness so essential to effective morality.

Chapter XX

The Women of Modern Spain

XX

THE WOMEN OF MODERN SPAIN

SPAIN, in all the days of her history, has been conspicuous among all other continental countries for the number of women who have wielded the sovereign power, and the reasons for this fact are not far to seek perhaps. In both Germany and Italy there has been little of national life or government in the broadest sense of the word until a very recent date, the custom of the empire has given male rulers to Austria, the illustrious Catherine of Voltaire's day has been the one woman to achieve prominence in Russia, and in France the ancient Salic law did not allow women to ascend the throne; so that, all in all, by this process of exclusion, it is easy to see that in Spain alone the conditions have been favorable for woman's tenure of royal office. A scrutiny of the list of Spanish monarchs reveals the fact that in all the long line there are no names more worthy of honor than those of Berenguela and Isabella the Catholic, and that, irrespective of sex, Isabella stands without any formidable rival as the ablest and most efficient ruler that Spain has ever had. The right of woman's accession to the Spanish throne was seriously threatened, however, early in the eighteenth century with the advent of the French Bourbons. Young Philip V., acting under French influences in this affair, as he did continually in all his various undertakings, had induced the Cortes to introduce the French Salic principle; and for the greater part

of the century this law was allowed to stand, although nothing happened to test it severely. By way of comment on this circumstance, it is interesting to note that this young king, Philip V., who had been instrumental in barring women from the succession, was, by tacit confession, unequal to his own task, and found his wisest counsellor in the person of the clever Princess Orsini. Spanish feeling and Spanish custom in regard to this matter were so strong, however, that Charles IV., when he came to the throne in 1789, had prevailed upon the Cortes to abolish the Salic law and to restore the old Castilian succession. While this was done secretly, a decree to this effect had never been issued, and legally the Salic law was still in force when Charles's son, Fernando VII., approached his last days. Fernando had been unlucky with his wives, as the first three proved to be short-lived, and the fourth, Maria Cristina, Princess of Naples, presented him with two daughters and no sons.

It happened that, before the birth of these daughters, Fernando had been induced by his wife to attack the Salic law and to restore the Castilian rule of succession, and in this way the elder princess, who was to become Isabella II., had a clear claim to the throne from the time of her birth. The person most interested in opposing this action was Don Carlos, brother of Fernando, who was the rightful heir in the event of his brother's death under the former procedure. When the fact became known that Don Carlos had been dispossessed in this way by the machinations of Maria Cristina, he and his followers put forth every effort to induce Fernando to undo what he had done; but all to no avail, and in 1833, when the king died, Maria became regent during the minority of the youthful Isabella. For the next seven years Spain was in a turmoil as the result of the continual revolts which were raised by the friends

of Don Carlos, and Maria for a time had much trouble in making headway against them.

The political game she was playing gave her strange allies during these days, for she was naturally in favor of an autocratic government, after the manner of the old régime; but as Don Carlos had rallied to his standard the clerical and conservative parties of the country, Maria was forced, as a mere matter of self-protection, to make friendly advances to the growing liberal forces in society, which had been brought into permanent existence by the success of republicanism in France. In spite of this nominal espousal of the liberal cause, Maria was continually trying to avoid popular concessions and to retain unimpaired the despotic power of the monarchy, but she was soon forced to see that, in appearance at least, she must pretend to advance the popular cause and give her subjects more extended privileges. Accordingly, she issued a decree in 1834 establishing a new constitution and creating a legislature composed of two chambers; but there was more pretence than reality in this reform, and the dissatisfaction of the liberals increased as the queen-regent's real purposes became more clearly understood. Fortunate in having at the head of her armies a great general, Espartero, Maria finally succeeded in dispersing and exhausting the Carlist armies; but then differences arose between the queen and Espartero over the rights of the chartered towns, which she was endeavoring to abolish; and the popular sentiment was so in favor of the liberal side of the discussion, that a revolution was threatened and Isabella was forced to seek safety in flight. For three years the general-statesman ruled, until the majority of the Princess Isabella was declared in 1843, and in that same year Espartero was forced into exile, as he had become unpopular on account of his friendship for England. With this change in governmental

affairs, Maria Cristina was allowed to return to Madrid, and she and her daughter, the new queen, Isabella II., controlled the destinies of the country. A husband was found for Isabella in the person of her cousin, Francis of Assis, but he was a sickly, impotent prince, with no vigor of mind or body, and the married life of this young couple was anything but happy. The country meanwhile continued in a state of unrest, and there were frequent revolutionary outbreaks. Isabella was no less unreliable than her mother had been, and her capricious manner of changing policy and changing advisers was productive of a state of lawlessness and disorder in all branches of the government which daily became more shameful. This shifting policy in matters of state was equally characteristic of the queen's behavior in other affairs. Dissatisfied with her pitiful husband, she soon abandoned her dignity as a queen and as a woman, in a most brazen way, and her private life was so scandalous as to become the talk of all Europe. But the court was kept in good humor by the lavish entertainments which were given; the proverbial Spanish sloth and indifference allowed all this to run unchecked, for a time at least; and the sound of the guitar and the song of the peasant were still heard throughout the land.

Some idea of the social life in Madrid at this time can be obtained from the following charming description of an afternoon ride in one of the city parks, written in September, 1853, by Madame Calderon de la Barca: "This beautiful *paseo,* called Las Delicias de Ysabel Segunda, had been freshly watered. Numbers of pretty girls in their graceful *amazones* galloped by on horseback, with their attendant *caballeros.* Few actual mantillas were to be seen. They were too warm for this season, and are besides confined to morning costume. Their place was supplied either by light Parisian bonnets or by a still prettier head-dress, a

veil of black lace or tulle thrown over the head, fastened by gold pins, and generally thrown very far back, the magnificent hair beautifully dressed. Certainly this appeared to me the prettiest head-dress in the world, showing to the greatest advantage the splendid eyes, fine hair, and expressive features of the wearers. I was astonished at the richness of the toilettes, and M—— assured me that luxury in dress is now carried here to an extraordinary height; and to show you that I am not so blinded by admiration for what is Spanish as not to see faults, at least when they are pointed out to me, I will allow that French women have a better idea of the fitness of things, and that there is an absence of simplicity in the dress of the Spanish women which is out of taste. I allude chiefly to those who were on foot. The rich silks and brocades which trail along the Prado, hiding pertinaciously the exquisitely small feet of the wearers, would be confined in Paris to the *élégantes* who promenade the Bois de Boulogne or the Champs-Elysées in carriages. Here the wife and the daughter of the poorest shopkeeper disdain chintz and calico; nothing short of silk or velvet is considered decorous except within doors. But, having made this confession, I must add that the general effect is charming, and as for beauty, both of face and figure, especially the latter, surely no city in the world can show such an amount of it."

In spite of the general tone of gayety which was pervading Madrid in these days of the early fifties, many of the members of the older nobility, conservative to the core, were holding somewhat aloof from the general social life of the time. Society had become too promiscuous for their exclusive tastes, and they were unwilling to open their drawing rooms to the cosmopolitan multitude then thronging the capital. Details of this aristocratic life are naturally somewhat difficult to obtain, but this same sprightly

Madame Calderon de la Barca, through her connection with the diplomatic corps at Madrid, was able to enter this circle in several instances, and her chatty account of a ball given by the Countess Montijo, one of the leaders in this exclusive set, if not one of its most exclusive members, is not lacking in interest: "A beautiful ball was given the other night at the Countess Montijo's. She certainly possesses the social talent more than any one I ever met with, and, without the least apparent effort, seems to have a kind of omnipresence in her salons, so that each one of her guests receives a due share of attention. The principal drawing room, all white and gold, is a noble room. The toilettes were more than usually elegant, the jewels universal. The finest diamonds were perhaps those of the Countess of Toreno, wife of the celebrated minister. The Countess of Ternan-Nuñez and the Princess Pio (an Italian lady), wore tiaras of emeralds and brilliants of a size and beauty that I have never seen surpassed. The Duchess of Alva was, as usual, dressed in perfect taste, but, alas! I am not able to describe. It was something white and vapory and covered with flowers, with a few diamond pins fastening the flowers in her hair. I observed that whenever a young girl was without a partner, there was the hostess introducing one to her, or if any awkward-looking youth stood neglected in a corner, she took his arm, brought him forward, presented him to some one, and made him dance. Or if some scientific man, invited for his merits,—for her parties are much less carefully winnowed than those of the aristocracy in general,—stood with his spectacles on, looking a little like a fish out of water, there was the countess beside him, making him take her to the buffet, conversing with him as she does well upon every subject, and putting him so much at his ease that in a few minutes he evidently felt quite at

home." Such a description as this must inevitably lead to the reflection that charming as the Countess Montijo may have been, she was in no way peculiar or remarkable except in so far as she represented the highest type of a polished, tactful Spanish hostess, for in every civilized modern country there are women of this class who excite general admiration.

The wavering policy of the capricious Isabella was somewhat strengthened in 1856, when the long-suffering people, unable to countenance for a longer time the universal corruption which existed in all branches of the government, rose in such threatening revolt, under the leadership of O'Donnell, that the queen was forced to give heed. The revolt counted among its supporters members of all political parties, who were now banded together from motives which were largely patriotic, and so great was their influence that Isabella was forced to accept their terms or lose her crown. For a few years there was an increased prosperity for Spain, but the improvement could not be of long duration, so long as the government remained under the same inefficient leadership. Finally, the end came in 1868, when there broke forth a general revolution which was but the forcible expression of the real and genuine spirit of discontent which was to be found among all classes of the people. The navy rebelled at Cadiz, and the fleet declared for the revolution, and then, to take away Isabella's last hope of support, certain popular generals, who had been sent into exile, returned, and led the royal troops against the hated sovereign. In the face of this overwhelming array of hostile forces, the queen crossed the Pyrenees as a fugitive, and when she went she left her crown behind her. After five years of upheaval, which descended at times to complete anarchy, with the advantage resting now with the conservatives and now with the

liberals, the crown was finally offered to the son of the dethroned queen, who, as Alfonso XII., began his reign under most auspicious circumstances. With his unlooked-for death in 1886, his wife and widow, Maria Cristina, was left as the regent for her unborn son, who has so recently attained his majority. This Maria was a most careful mother, who devoted herself with the utmost fidelity to the education of her son; and her conception of this duty was so high and serious that she practically put a stop to the social life of the court, that she might give herself unreservedly to her important task. With what success, the future alone can tell, but, in the meanwhile, there is but one opinion as to her personal worth and character.

Without venturing a prediction as to the probable future for Spain in the history of the world, the fact remains that in recent years the country has advanced greatly from many points of view, so far as its domestic affairs are concerned. There has been a remarkable commercial activity, railroads have opened up much of the country which had been cut off from the main currents of life from time immemorial, and the widespread use of electricity for lighting and for motive power is perhaps unexcelled in any other European country. The greatest question now confronting Spain is, in the opinion of many, the question of popular education, and here there is continual advancement. As might be expected in a country like Spain, where southern, and in some cases semi-Oriental, ideas must of necessity exist with regard to women, their education has not yet made great progress, although the question is being considered in a most liberal and enlightened spirit. No movement in this day and generation can be successfully brought to an issue unless it can be shown that there is some general demand for the measures proposed, and

until very recently in Spain there was general apathy with regard to the education of women. For many years girls have been carefully instructed in two things, religion and domestic science, and for neither of these things was any extended course of study necessary. The parochial schools, with all their narrowness, prepared the maiden for her first communion, and her mother gave her such training in the arts of the housewife as she might need when she married and had a home of her own to care for. These two things accomplished, the average middle-class Spaniard, until a very recent day, was utterly unable to see that there was anything more necessary, or that the system was defective in any way. But the modern spirit has entered the country, and an organized effort is now being made to show the advantages of a higher education and to furnish the opportunity for obtaining it. In this work of educational reform among Spanish women, an American, Mrs. Gulick, the wife of an American missionary at San Sebastian, has played a leading part. Organizing a school which was maintained under her supervision, she has been quite successful in what she has accomplished, and believes that she has "proved the intellectual ability of Spanish girls." Her pupils have been received in the National Institute, where they have given a good account of themselves; and a few of them have even been admitted to the examinations of the University of Madrid, where they have maintained a high rank. Mrs. Gulick is not the only leading exponent of higher education for Spanish women, however, as the whole movement is now practically under the moral leadership of a most competent and earnest woman, Emilia Pardo Bazan, who understands the wants of her fellow countrywomen and is striving in every legitimate way to give them the sort of instruction they need. Free schools exist in all the cities and towns

for both boys and girls, and recent attempts have been made to enact a compulsory education law. Numerous normal schools have been established in the various cities, which are open to both men and women, and the number of women teachers is rapidly increasing. Secular education is far more advanced and far more in keeping with the spirit of the times than is the instruction which is to be found in the schools conducted by the teaching orders. The girls in the convents are taught to adore the Virgin in a very abstract and indefinite way, and are given very little practical advice as to the essential traits of true womanhood. A remarkable article, written recently in one of the Madrid papers by one who signed himself "A Priest of the Spanish Catholic Church," says, apropos of this very question: "Instead of the Virgin being held up to admiration as the Mother of Our Lord and as an example of all feminine perfection, the ideal woman and mother, the people are called upon to worship the idea of the Immaculate Conception, an abstract dogma of recent invention. . . ." This Madonna worship is one of the characteristic things in the religious life of Spain, and everywhere *La Virgen,* who is rarely if ever called *Santa Maria,* is an object of great love and reverence. There are many of these *Virgenes* scattered throughout the country, and each is reverenced. Many of them are supposed to work miracles or answer prayers, and their chapels are filled with the votive offerings of those who have been helped in time of trouble. Not the least pathetic among these offerings are the long locks of hair tied with ribbons of many colors, which have been contributed by some mother because her child has been restored from sickness to health. Women are more devout than the men in their observance of religious duties, although the whole population is religious to an unusual degree so far as the outward

forms are concerned, but the real religion which aims at character building is little known as yet.

With regard to the general position of women in Spain, and their influence upon public life, which as yet is not of any considerable moment, Madame L. Higgin, in her recent volume upon Spanish life, writes as follows: "As a rule, they take no leading part in politics, devoting themselves chiefly to charitable works. There is a general movement for higher education and greater liberty of thought and action among women, and there are a certain limited number who frankly range themselves on the side of so-called emancipation, who attend socialistic and other meetings, and who aspire to be the comrades of men rather than their objects of worship or their playthings. But this movement is scarcely more than in its infancy. It must be remembered that even within the present generation the bedrooms allotted to girls were always approached through those of their parents, that no girl or unmarried woman could go unattended, and that to be left alone in a room with a man was to lose her reputation. Already these things seem dreams of the past; nor could one well believe, what is, however, a fact, that there were fathers of the upper classes in the first half of the last century who preferred that their daughters should not learn to read or write, and especially the latter, as it only enabled them to read letters clandestinely received from lovers and to reply to them. The natural consequence of this was the custom, which so largely prevailed, of young men, absolutely unknown to the parents, establishing correspondence or meetings with the objects of their adoration by means of a complacent *doncella* with an open palm, or the pastime known as *pelando el pavo* (literally, "plucking the turkey"), which consisted of serenades of love songs, amorous dialogues, or the passage

of notes through the *reja*—the iron gratings which protect the lower windows of Spanish houses from the prowling human wolf—or from the balconies. Many a time have I seen these interesting little missives let down past my balcony to the waiting gallant below, and his drawn up. Only once I saw a neighbor, in the balcony below, intercept the post and, I believe, substitute some other letter."

This seclusion of the young girls is in itself a sufficient comment upon the sentiments of honor and duty which are current among the male portion of the population, and it is plain that this condition of affairs can find little betterment until the nation finds new social ideals. Such conditions as these are mediæval, or Oriental at best, and it is to be hoped that the newer education which is now influencing Spain may help to bring about a better and saner view of the social intercourse of men and women. As a direct result of the general attitude, the men upon the streets of a Spanish city will often surprise a foreigner by their cool insolence in the presence of the women they may happen to meet. Her appearance is made the subject for much audible comment, and such exclamations as *Ay! que buenos ojos! Que bonita eres!* [Oh! what fine eyes! How pretty you are!] are only too common. The woman thus characterized will modify her conduct according to the necessities of the situation; and if her casual admirer happens to be young and good-looking and she herself is not averse to flattery, she will reward him with a quick smile. In any case, the whole matter is treated as an ordinary occurrence, as it is, and no insult is felt where none is intended. Such remarks are but an expression, which is oftentimes naïve, of the admiration which is felt at the sight of unusual feminine charms. The incident simply goes to show that everywhere in Spain there is tacit recognition of the general inferiority

of women. In the laboring and peasant classes, where the women work with the men, such lapses from the conventional standard of good manners would not cause so much comment; but under these circumstances the dangers and the annoyances are not so great, as these women of the people, with their practical experience in life, ignorant as they may be, are often more competent to take care of themselves than are their more carefully educated sisters in polite society who have been so carefully fenced from harm.

Many of the objectionable features of Spanish life which spring from these long-standing notions in regard to women are bound to disappear as both men and women become more educated, and in several particulars already encouraging progress has been made. Marriage laws and customs may always be considered as telling bits of evidence in the discussion of any question of this nature, and in Spain, as the result of modern innovations, the rights of the woman in contracting the marriage relation are superior to those enjoyed elsewhere on the continent or even in England. In the old days, the *mariage de convenance* was a matter of course in educated circles, and the parents and relatives of a girl were given an almost absolute power in arranging for her future welfare. Now, as the result of an enlightened public sentiment, which is somewhat unexpected in that it is in advance of many other social customs, there is a law which gives a girl the right to marry the man of her choice, even against her parents' wishes. No father can compel his daughter to marry against her will; and if there is any attempt to force her in the matter, she is entitled to claim the protection of a magistrate, who is empowered by law to protect her from such oppression. If the parents are insistent, the magistrate may take the girl from her father's house and act as her guardian until the

time of her majority, when she is free to marry according to her own fancy. Nor is any such rebellious action to be construed as prejudicial to the daughter's right to inherit that portion of her father's estate to which she would otherwise have a legal claim. Madame Higgin relates the following cases which came within the range of her personal experience: "In one case, the first intimation a father received of his daughter's engagement was the notice from a neighboring magistrate that she was about to be married; and in another, a daughter left her mother's house and was married from that of the magistrate, to a man without any income and considerably below her in rank. In all these cases the contracting parties were of the highest rank."

With regard to the wedding service, customs have changed greatly during the course of the last century. It was natural that Spain, in common with all other Catholic countries, should have given the Church entire control of the marriage sacrament for many years, and it was not until the republicanism of the nineteenth century forced a change that the civil marriage was instituted as it had been in France. While not compulsory, the religious service is almost always performed, in addition to the other, except among the poor, who are deterred by the cost of this double wedding; and sometimes the religious service is held at the church and sometimes at the home of the bride. It was generally the custom in the church weddings for all the ladies in the wedding party, including the bride, to dress in black; but there was finally so much opposition to this sombre hue at such a joyous occasion, that the fashionable world within recent times has made the house wedding a possibility, and at such a function there was no limit to the brilliant display possible. The English and American custom of taking a wedding journey immediately after the

ceremony is not common in Spain, and the Spaniards, in their conversation and sometimes in their books, are not slow to express their opinions with regard to the matter, insisting that it is much preferable to remain at home among friends than to "expose themselves to the jeers of postilions and stable boys," to quote a line from Fernan Caballero's *Clemencia*. In spite of this firmly rooted opinion, however, that the national customs are best, and in this particular it seems indeed as if they were more reasonable, the wedding journey is slowly being adopted in what they call "*el* high life," and it may some day become one of the fixed institutions of the land, as it is with us. All this is but another proof of the fact that fashions are now cosmopolitan things, and that among the educated and wealthy classes in all countries there are often many more points of resemblance than are to be found between any given group of these cosmopolites and some of their own fellow countrymen taken from a lower class in society.

Some time after the Prince of Naples, who is now the King of Italy, had attracted the favorable comment of all thinking people for his determination not to wed until he married for love, a similar occurrence in Spain revealed the fact that Maria Cristina, the queen-regent, was determined to accept the modern and sensible notion of marriage for one of her own children, and thus incidentally to give to her people in general the benefit of a powerful precedent in such matters. Mention has already been made of the fact that, according to certain laws, a Spanish girl may now refuse to marry at her parents' dictation; but, in spite of the fact that such laws exist, it cannot be said that they are often called into play, for the daughter is still in such a state of childish dependence upon her father and mother, that any such step as described, which amounts to nothing more or less than a revolt against

parental authority, would fill her with dismay and would prove more than she would dare to attempt. The laws upon the statute books indicate that there is a public appreciation of the fact that marriage should not be a matter of coercion, but among the people in general the old idea is still more powerful, and Spanish daughters are married daily to the husbands chosen by their match-making mothers or aunts. In the face of this popular custom, and in spite of the fact that royal marriages, on account of their somewhat political character, have generally been made without regard to sentiment, the queen-regent decided that her oldest daughter, the Princess of Asturias, should marry the man she loved. There were various worldly, or rather political, reasons against the proposed alliance; but Maria brushed them all aside and allowed the whole affair to progress in a natural way, as there seemed to be nothing in the proposed alliance which gave her cause for alarm. Here are the facts in the case. Among the playfellows of the little King Alfonso XIII. there were two distant cousins, the sons of the Count of Caserta, and between the elder, Don Carlos, and the young princess a warm attachment soon sprang up which led to a betrothal, with the queen's consent. At once there was a protest which would have intimidated a person of weaker character. It was pointed out that Don Carlos the youth was the son of a man who had been chief of staff to the Pretender Don Carlos, who had been responsible for so much of the disorder in Spain within the last quarter of a century; and although Caserta and his sons had taken the oath of allegiance to Alfonso XIII., it was feared that in some way this marriage might give the Pretender a new claim upon the government, and that in future years it might lead to renewed domestic strife. Furthermore, it was alleged that the Jesuits, who are known conservatives and legitimists

everywhere, and who had been accused of sympathizing with the Pretender's claims, were behind this new alliance, and, as the work of their hands, it was popularly considered as a matter of very doubtful expediency. But the queen persisted in her course, entirely without political motives, so far as anyone has been able to discover, and preparations for the wedding were begun in earnest.

Then it was that the affair began to assume a more national and more serious character. The liberal party, which was in power and which naturally looked with suspicion upon anything tainted with conservatism, decided to oppose the marriage, and the prime minister, who was no other than the great Sagasta, allowed the queen to understand plainly that the whole affair must be dropped. Maria Cristina informed her prime minister that *her* will was to be law in the matter, and that she was unwilling to allow any sort of governmental interference. The marriage now precipitated a national crisis, Sagasta and all the members of his cabinet resigned their portfolios of office, and the queen was left to form a new ministry. She appointed the new members from the ranks of the conservative party, and, now without cabinet opposition, the marriage was celebrated. Then the storm arose again: there were riots and disturbances in most of the large cities; the Jesuits, who were made responsible for this turn of affairs, were openly attacked, even in Madrid. It was even claimed that the young king's confessor belonged to the hated order, and everywhere there were fears expressed that the government might soon be delivered up to the Carlists. This impression was only increased when the conservative ministry suspended the constitutional guarantees and assumed to rule with unlimited authority. This move was simply taken, it appears, as a matter of extreme necessity under the circumstances, as the queen

and her advisers were determined to keep the upper hand and make no concession under such riotous pressure. Finally, as the disorder was unabated, and it became evident that the cabinet could never gain public confidence, Sagasta, by dint of much persuading, was again induced to become prime minister, and with his return peace was restored and the revolution which was surely threatening was averted.

So ended this memorable contest wherein the queen seemed almost willing to sacrifice her son's crown that she might humor her daughter's whim, and a satisfactory explanation of the whole affair which would be convincing to all the parties concerned is doubtless difficult to make. In the absence of any political motives which can be proved or rightfully suspected, it would seem that Maria Cristina, even though a queen, had been making a most royal battle for the idea that marriage should be a matter of inclination and not a matter of compulsion; and her heroic measures to carry out her ideas cannot fail to produce a great impression upon liberal Spain, as soon as the scare about the Jesuits and the Carlists has had time to subside.

The national amusements of Spain, as they affect the whole people, may be reduced to two, bull-fighting and dancing. While women never take part in the contests of the arena, they are none the less among the most interested of the spectators, and the Plaza de Toros on a Sunday is the place to see their wonderfully brilliant costumes. With regard to Spanish dancing, as a popular amusement it is almost universal, and rarely are two or three gathered together but that the sound of the tambourine, guitar, and castanets is heard and the dance is in full swing. Much has been written about some of these national dances, and often the idea is left in the mind of the reader that they are all very shocking and indecent, but this is hardly the fact.

Certain dances are to be seen in Spain to-day, among the gypsies, which have come down practically unchanged from the Roman days, when Martial and Horace were enchanted by the graceful motions of the dancing girls of their time; and these are undoubtedly suggestive in a high degree, and are not less objectionable than the more widely known Oriental dances which have recently made their advent into the United States; but these dances are in no way national or common. They are rarely seen, except in the gypsy quarter of Seville, and there they are generally arranged for money-making purposes. In short, they are no more typical of Spanish dances than the questionable evolutions of the old Quadrille at the Moulin Rouge were representative of the dances of the French people, and it is time that the libel should be stopped. The country people and the working classes dance with the enjoyment of children, and generally they sing at the same time some love song which is unending, and sometimes improvised as the dance proceeds.

In athletic matters it cannot be said that Spanish women are very active, and in this they are somewhat behind their brothers, who have numerous games which test their skill and endurance. Though the bicycle is well known now in Spain, the Spanish women have not adopted it with the zest which was shown by the women of France, and it is doubtful if it will ever be popular among them. Horseback riding is a fashionable amusement among the wealthy city women, but their attainments in this branch of sport seem insignificant when compared to the riding of English and American women. The Spanish riding horse is a pacer rather than a trotter, and this cradle-like motion is certainly better suited to the Spanish women. Few, if any, of them aspire to follow the hounds, a ditch or a gate would present difficulties which would be truly insurmountable,

and they never acquire the ease and grace in this exercise which are the mark of an expert horsewoman.

The dark beauty of the Spanish women has long been a favorite theme, and there is little to say on that subject which has not been said a thousand times before, but no account of them would be complete without some word in recognition of their many personal charms. In the cities, the women, so far as their dress is concerned, have lost their individuality, as the women of other nations have done, in their efforts to follow the Parisian styles; but there is still a certain charming simplicity of manner which characterizes the whole bearing of a Spanish lady, and is quite free from that affectation and studied deportment which are too often considered as the acme of good breeding. This almost absolute lack of self-consciousness often leads to acts so naïve that foreigners are often led to question their sense of propriety. But with this naïveté and simplicity is joined a great love for dress and display. Madame Higgin says on this subject: "Spanish women are great dressers, and the costumes seen at the race meetings at the Hippodrome and in the Parque are elaborately French, and sometimes startling. The upper middle class go to Santander, Biarritz, or one of the other fashionable watering places, and it is said of the ladies that they only stop as many days as they can sport new costumes. If they go for a fortnight, they must have fifteen absolutely new dresses, as they would never think of putting one on a second time. They take with them immense trunks, such as we generally associate with American travellers; these are called *mundos* (worlds)—a name which one feels certain was given by the suffering man who is expected to look after them. In the provinces, however, among the women of the peasant class, Parisian bonnets are neither worn nor appreciated; the good and

time-honored customs in regard to peasant dress have been retained, and there rather than in the cities is to be seen the pure type as it has existed for centuries, unaffected and unalloyed by contact with the manners and customs of other nations."

It is difficult to say what the condition of Spanish women will be as the years go by, but it is at least certain that they will be better educated than they are to-day, and better able to understand the real meaning of life. Now they are often veritable children, who know nothing of affairs at home or of tne world abroad, somewhat proud of their manifest charms and ever ready for a conquest; but with a better mental training and some enlarged conception of the real and essential duties in modern life, the unimportant things will be gradually relegated to their proper position, and the whole nation will gain new strength from an ennobled womanhood.

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